raw knuckles

by

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INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Four inverted light bulbs shine upon a suspended metal ring like a diadem with luminous adornment. Beneath the hanging fixture stands a dinner table at which is seated a red-headed BOY of eleven years clad in blue short pants and a gray short sleeve button-up shirt. Beside him sits his FATHER, a burly man with thatches of fur sprouting from beneath the collar of his yellowed shirt and along his beefy arms.

The Boy stares down at the floral place mat set before him; he is terrified. The Father looks upon his son; the embittered man's bloodshot eyes are red and rancid oysters.

FATHER
Go get me my whiskey.

The Boy nods silently and stands. The Father eyes his son derisively.

FATHER
(continuing)
You look like a girl. You look like a girl and you cry like a girl.

The Boy says nothing...he just stares silently at the ground.

FATHER
(continuing)
And you're meek.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Leave him alone!

The Father turns to face the door leading to the kitchen, his bloodshot eyes narrowed in anger.

FATHER
It's time for our son to speak up for himself. He's nearly a man grown.

The Father turns back to the Boy.

FATHER
(continuing)
You ever hear that Bible sayin'--
'The meek shall inherit the earth'?

The Boy, looking at his own denuded leather shoes, nods.

FATHER
(continuing)
Well don't believe it. That's just what weak people say to feel better about themselves. 'Stand tall with two fists ready,' my pa used to say. He was a man nobody said 'no' to. Not ever.

The Father flicks his thick fingers in the air as if swatting at a fly.

FATHER
(continuing)
Get me my whiskey. Black Barrel.

The Boy turns around and walks toward the wide credenza. The Father is lost in reflection...the memories that come to him are bittersweet.

The Boy wipes his sparkling eyes when he reaches the credenza...upon which sit several glasses and a bucket of ice. He reaches a tremulous hand toward the curvilinear handle in its center, grips it and pulls. The door, segmented into three panels, swings wide, twice folding in upon itself to reveal several small shelves lined with bottles of liquor. The Boy's bright, wet eyes scan the credenza's contents. His stomach sinks as he gleans the bottle of Black Barrel Whiskey: it is empty.

BOY
Ain't got none left.

The Father is irritated.

FATHER
Margaret! As my lawfully wedded wife, you're s'possed to keep me happy. I ain't happy when I'm out of Black Barrel.

MARGARET (O.S.)
And you aren't terribly happy when you drink it, either.

The Father stands up from the table, the legs of his wooden chair loudly SCRAPING against the floorboards. The Boy winces at the sound.

The Father faces the kitchen door, his eyes smoldering.

FATHER
I guess I didn't learn you properly 'bout sassin' me. Come out here, Margaret. Right now.

The door opens wide to reveal MARGARET, mid-thirties and slightly plump. The flesh around her right eye is swollen and discolored black and purple; her burst lower lip is distended and riven by two carmine cracks.

She stares at her husband, unflinchingly. He meets her direct gaze with his bloodshot eyes.

FATHER
(continuing)
Sassy...and bold.

Margaret turns to face the Boy.

MARGARET
Go to your room.

FATHER
No.
(shaking his head for emphasis)
No.

The Father advances upon Margaret; her hands begin to shake, but she holds her ground.

FATHER
(continuing)
He stays. He stays and he watches.

The Father closes the distance between himself and his wife. He raises his right hand to her neck, running his blunt, callused fingertips along her tired skin, delicately divining the sinews and bones beneath.

FATHER
(continuing)
William...bring me my bottle of vodka.

Tears streaming down his face, the Boy looks through the bottles in the credenza.

MARGARET
It's the tall one with the green cap.

The Boy descries and then grabs the bottle; he pulls it from within the credenza's enclosure.

Holding the bottle, the Boy walks towards his father, his weathered loafers TAPPING gently upon the floorboards. His footsteps are silenced when he reaches the carpeted section of the room. He cannot hear anything other than his own labored breathing.

FATHER
Open it.

The Boy tries to twist off the top, but cannot. He then squats, wedges the bottle between his knees and applies himself to the top with more force.

FATHER
(continuing)
If you can't get that open, I'll learn you too.

The Boy grimaces as he tries to unfasten the bottle top; his legs wobble and his body shakes with the effort. Margaret silently mouths a prayer as she watches her son struggle with the bottle; for the first time tears come to her eyes.

The Boy twists the bottle cap loose; Margaret relaxes.

FATHER
(continuing)
Give it here.

The Boy proffers the opened bottle to his Father. The man takes the cylinder of clear fluid in his thick right hand and brings the nozzle to his thin, chapped lips. He stares at Margaret for a meaningful moment and then tilts the bottle back. He GULPS down a large mouthful...and then a second GULP...and then a third GULP. He lowers the bottle.

The Father examines Margaret for a moment, his eyes animated with vitriolic life.

FATHER
(continuing)
You look like hell. When did my wife ever get so fat?

Margaret stares back at him, an aloof veil tightly, willfully drawn over her burgeoning terror.

The Father brings the vodka bottle to his lips again and drinks a healthy GULP, followed by another GULP...and another GULP...and another GULP. He then places the bottle in between his face and his wife's face. He looks at her through the bottle, her features distorted and stretched by the glass.

FATHER
(continuing)
You look like a sow...you look like a sow and you sass me.

The Father takes one last sip of vodka. He spits the fluid into his wife's eyes, where it burns like acid. Margaret suppresses a scream. She squints, tilts her head down and quietly wipes her eyes clear with the bottom of her sullied apron.

The Father nods in approval and then hands the bottle back to the Boy. The Boy takes it.

FATHER
(continuing)
Put the cap on.

The Boy twists the green cap on.

The Father punches Margaret in the neck, the impact sounding with a loud SNAP. Margaret stumbles back toward the door clutching her neck, GULPING at and GASPING for air.

The Boy drops the bottle and- hands balled into small fists- runs at his father; the man stands more than a foot taller than him.

Margaret leans against the door, COUGHING horribly as she attempts to breathe through her throttled windpipe.

The small, slender Boy punches his father in the stomach with his left fist and then his right and then his left. The blows are ineffectual.

The Father ferociously CRACKS his son across the face with the back of his thick hand; the blow sends the boy reeling, towards the table. The boy CRIES out when the wooden corner of the table impacts his lower back. He falls to the ground.

The Father turns back to his wife; she is massaging her neck with both hands, and wetly WHEEZING.

FATHER
(continuing)
Finish supper.

Margaret turns her gaze to her husband.

FATHER
(continuing)
Finish supper.

Margaret nods and walks back to the kitchen door. The Father looks at his son: the boy lies upon the floor, shaking and silently sobbing.

FATHER
(continuing)
It's good that you stood up for yourself, son.

The Father leans over and picks up the toppled bottle of vodka. He unfastens the green top and flings it away: he has no intention of closing the bottle again. He GULPS down another mouthful while staring at his prostrate son.

BOY
I hate you.

The Father nods his head in approbation.

FATHER
I hated my father too.

The Father SLAMS the bottle on the table and sits before it, staring at the sloshing liquid inside.

FATHER
(continuing)
There is strength in hatred.

Titlecard: In or Abutting Miami Beach, 1927

EXT. THE BEACH - DAWN

The sun looks like an egg yolk where it sits upon the horizon, delineating the point at which the sky ends and the water begins. Upon the beach walk three flamingos, their pink legs bending backwards with every step, their heads nodding in unison as if some private joke has just been told.

The trio of flamingos gingerly ramble up the beach, three inverted pink question marks gliding against a tapestry of rich blue sky and turquoise water, each pressing triangular footprints into the pale sand.

A wave climbs up the shore towards the birds; they hurry out of its reach, northward along the coast...slightly concerned.

A thrown rock lands between the flamingos, breaking up the pink triumvirate.

Further up the beach are two ten year old BOYS in striped swimming trunks and sleeveless shirts: a chubby boy with black hair and freckles named HAROLD and a lanky blond boy with green eyes named EDDIE. Some amorphous lumps of sand lie between them.

EDDIE
Why'd you do that?

HAROLD
You want them to peck out your eyes?

EDDIE
Flamingos don't attack people.

HAROLD
That's not what I read in 'Eldritch Horror'. All animals are dangerous-- especially when under certain influences.

EDDIE
You're just mean is all. That's what my dad says.

HAROLD
Go get some sticks for the foundations.

EDDIE
Why?

HAROLD
Because that's how you do things. I want this castle to last forever.

EDDIE
Me too.

Eddie stands up, surveying the empty beach. Harold piles lumps of wet sand in one corner of the castle, erecting the first tower.

HAROLD
Come on-- before the cement hardens.

Eddie sees a dark aberration in the sand due south of where he currently stands. He runs towards it.

EDDIE
Hurry up.

Eddie's dirty feet unearth a fantail of sand as he races towards the darkened area. He soon descries that the anomaly is a toppled grovewood, its roots exposed to the rising sun like the bowels of a wooden animal.

Eddie walks up to the the tangled mass of roots and looks inside. Something moves within the tendrils; his eyes widen; fear assails him.

EDDIE
(continuing)
I saw a crab in there!

HAROLD
Hurry!

Eddie chokes down his fear and kneels beside the fallen grovewood as far away from the darkened root cluster as possible. He applies himself to a large branch, bending it with all his strength.

SNAP. A blue crab scuttles out of the root cluster. Eddie SHRIEKS, drops the branch and backs away. The crustacean- similarly frightened- wheels away from Eddie, buoyed by a rapid tattoo of pointed legs. The light catches brilliantly upon a clutched item in its left pincer.

Harold rises from the miniature construction site and looks over at his friend.

HAROLD
(continuing)
What happened? Did it pinch you?

EDDIE
It's got a ring. It's got a golden wedding ring!

HAROLD
Get it!

Eddie picks up the broken branch and apprehensively follows the retreating specimen, as if he were the crab's enormous human shadow.

HAROLD
(continuing)
Smash it, Eddie, smash it! We can sell that ring and get bicycles with the money...and egg creams...and heaps of taffy-- all the colors.

Eddie, following behind the crab, shakes his head.

EDDIE
No way-- this is my big chance. I'm going to give it to Gertrude and ask for her hand in marriage.

HAROLD
She doesn't even like you!

EDDIE
She will now.

Harold, alarmed by Eddie's plans, runs at him. Eddie chases after the scurrying crab.

EXT. COLLINS AVENUE - SAME

Manicured lawns circumscribed by palm trees are the properties upon which myriad Art Deco hotels sit like pastel toys. The stylized buildings vary wildly: one is dotted with small circular windows as if in imitation of a steamboat, one is a rectilinear and geometrically impressive construct, another has an enormous overhanging balcony within which is a kidney-shaped swimming pool. But for a lone female pedestrian, the street is empty, quiet and still at this early hour.

The twenty-six year old blond-haired woman makes her way up the avenue. She walks slowly upon her silver, high-heeled sandals, wincing slightly as her sinewy legs shift beneath her black, red and silver gown. Her blue eyes, full lips and slightly upturned nose are hidden from the sun by the wide brim of her silver and black hat, from which jut two large red feathers. She tightly grips her silver clutch in her left hand. Her name is LORALINE.

She looks at the beach. She YAWNS and then stops walking.

Loraline leans over and unties the sandal straps on her left shin; the laces falls away like a dead metallic serpents. She kicks the heeled sandal off. She unfastens the straps on her right sandal and kicks it off, alongside its discarded sibling.

The tired woman rubs her sore feet for a moment. She brings the inside of her forearm against her breasts and applies a little pressure, hugging herself. She grimaces.

Loraline picks up her sandals and stands upright, upon her bare feet. She winds the dangling straps around the silver shoes as if it were a ball of yarn and then tucks them beneath her armpit.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Loraline walks in the shallows, her feet submerged in the turquoise water. She looks out at the horizon: the sun has just broken free of the water...a new day has begun.

She looks back along the beach and sees an upright anomaly, a pale obelisk. She walks towards it. Two seagulls wheel overhead, CAWING.

Loraline nears the structure-- a tented stand with a wooden sign that reads, 'Iced Drinks'. She walks towards the striped tent.

A sprightly blond GIRL of fourteen and her petite, raisin-like GRANDMOTHER- both in yellow sundresses- brush the fabric of the stand with wire brooms. Loraline approaches them.

LORALINE
Are you ladies open for business?

The Girl nods excitedly. The Grandmother's eyes flicker up and down Loraline's tight-fitting evening apparel; the crone's face is inscrutable.

GIRL
We sure are ma'am. What'll it be?

LORALINE
What do you have?

GIRL
Iced tea. Iced lemonade. Iced pink lemonade. Iced ginger soda. Everything is a penny and you can keep the cup.

Loraline smiles at the girl's enthusiasm.

LORALINE
Iced tea please.

The Girl nods and retreats inside the striped tent.

GRANDMOTHER
You wouldn't by any chance be that woman from Philly who everyone's looking for, are you? The one who didn't show up to her own wedding?

Loraline shakes her head, 'no'.

LORALINE
The men I associate with aren't terribly inclined towards proposals.

Loraline unlaces her clutch and unbuttons the fastening strap. She opens the silver oblong: it is filled with one and five dollar bills. The Grandmother's eyes flicker from the money to Loraline's fitted dress, elaborate hat and coruscating shoes.

The Girl walks out of the tent, holding a tall paper cup filled to the brim with amber iced tea; two chips of ice and three mint leaves slowly orbit the liquid. The Grandmother takes the cup from her daughter.

GRANDMOTHER
Go back inside and start picking those mint leaves.

The Girl opens her mouth to complain, but sees a hard look in her Grandmother's eyes. Loraline pretends not to notice the exchange.

The Girl nods and departs. The Grandmother turns back to Loraline, proffering the drink as if to an infirm individual.

GRANDMOTHER
(continuing)
Keep your money, dear.

Loraline smiles as she takes the cup of iced tea.

LORALINE
Thank you.

Loraline walks away from the drink stand; her eyes slowly fill with tears.

INT. JACKRABBIT RAILWAY, DINING CAR - LATE MORNING

The Jackrabbit train's celebrated dining car is panelled in varnished wood etched with elaborate whorls and glyphs; the space is furnished with padded chairs, cloth-covered tables and sofas. Rugs lie about the enclosure, both animal (lion and bear) and Oriental. WAITERS in tuxedos push rolling carts upon which platters of roasted fowl and pork, wedges of cheese and bread, and urns of water, tea and coffee tour the room.

Seated at the largest table is a group of seven: four WOMEN and three MEN, all well-dressed, shiny and smiling.

The Men have iridescent suits and cigars the size of Polish sausages; the Women wear fur stoles and summer dresses and smoke cigarettes through long ivory filters.

A short, squat, pudgy forty-two year-old fellow with enormous eyes, receding brown hair, a crooked nose and a broad grin approaches the table. He wears a silk smoking jacket and a golden necklace; the glowing butt of a cigar is wedged between his ring finger and his pinky. He is STUMPY STUBBS.

The Women at the table look up at Stumpy Stubbs and begin to LAUGH. The Men look at Stumpy Stubbs and HOWL.

STUMPY STUBBS
Where the hell were you kids during the premiere of 'Clown Business'? That crowd was so quiet I could hear the sound of an old woman sewing...and she was in the next town.

One of the Women seated at the table SHRIEKS with delight; others GIGGLE and TITTER.

MAN
'Clown Business'? How come I never heard of that one?

STUMPY STUBBS
It was such a flop they decided to make it a drama. 'Eulogy for Paintface'.

WOMAN
I saw that one! I cried.

STUMPY STUBBS
You weren't supposed to.

The septet LAUGHS again; Stumpy Stubbs pulls out a chair and takes a seat amidst the Women.

He raises his right hand to his mouth and bites into his cigar stub, the diameter of which compares to a banana. Stumpy boldly thrusts his right hand towards his neighbor's lap.

MADELINE, the nineteen year old brunette on Stumpy's right, GASPS in alarm. Beneath the table, Stumpy's blunt hand travels up the slit of her skirt, in between her legs. Her face turns red.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
Hold still Madeline...I wouldn't want to do anything others might somehow misconstrue as inappropriate.

Madeline stares at him, aghast.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
You've come to term and- by god- I'm going to deliver this baby!

For a moment the dining car is a frozen tableau: Stumpy Stubbs' hand thrust beneath Madeline's legs; the Waiters paused in their food-carrying endeavours; the wide smiling eyes of the surrounding guests; glasses of water and tea frozen just beyond the lips of drinkers; a bite of filet mignon an inch from an old man's mouth.

Stumpy Stubbs grins. He withdraws his hand-- clutched within it is a flask made of silver, the name 'S. Stubbs' engraved into it. He plucks his cigar from his mouth, flicks it into the porcelain ashtray and then twists off the top of the hooch steel.

Two tall aquiline WAITERS exchange nervous glances; they clear their throats in unison. The Older Waiter inhales and approaches Stumpy Stubbs.

OLDER WAITER
I'm sorry Sir, but as of 1920, federal law prohibits imbibing alcoholic beverages-

STUMPY STUBBS
Don't worry pal, I know the law. I swear on your lives- and the lives of your children- that it's only water in here.

Stumpy wags the silver flask; the sunlight is harshly refracted into the Older Waiter's eyes. Blinded, the server squints and turns away.

Stumpy drinks from the flask; his crooked and pocked nose reddens. The Younger Waiter walks beside the first, fuming over Stumpy Stubbs' behavior.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing; to the Waiters)
I have a Scottish Terrier in cabin twelve-- I rent him his own room because sometimes he doesn't approve of my guests. His name is Irish and he's a bit haughty. As a silent protest over not being invited out, he shit all over the floor when last I paid him a visit.

Stumpy reaches into his pocket and withdraws two five dollar bills; he extends the tender to the Waiters.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
Why don't you two fine gentlemen go and clean up that mess?

The group at the table begins to LAUGH hysterically. The Waiters' faces redden; their eyes burn with hatred as they stare at Stumpy Stubbs and the proffered stipend. The silent film star stares back at them, incurious and unblinking.

The Older Waiter hastily grabs the two bills and leaves the dining car, accompanied by his partner. Stumpy Stubbs sips again from the flask; he offers it to Madeline. She declines with a shake of her head.

MADELINE
My friends warned me not to talk to you.

Stumpy leans over and kisses Madeline on the cheek. SMECK.

STUMPY STUBBS
Would you like to come to my shindy?

Madeline's eyes widen; the light pouring through the windows catches brilliantly upon them.

MADELINE
Yes Stumpy, I was hoping you would ask me-- I hear it's the best shindy all year.

She nods her head twice more to punctuate her remark. Stumpy Stubbs looks at the chipper young woman: her eager eyes and her brunette hair inflamed by the morning sun.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
Next stop Miami, The Magic City.

STUMPY STUBBS
(grinning)
You'll do swell.

EXT. TOERBEN'S ROOFTOP SWIMMING POOL - JUST BEFORE NOON

Atop a mint green hotel is a curvilinear pool shaped like a lopsided kidney bean; white patio furniture and polka-dotted parasols pepper the exposed recreational area around it. WOMEN in one piece bathing suits sit beneath the parasols reading books and magazines; MEN discreetly look at women other than the ones beside them.

Seated upon the edge of a low diving board, is a boyish thirty-one year old man in white swimming trunks. His blond hair is heavily oiled and slicked back from his cherubic face. He raises his hands in front of his bloodshot eyes: they are shaking. His name is REGINALD.

The diving board beneath him abruptly dips; he tilts forward, falling toward the water. He grabs the sides of the coarse plank and steadies himself as it bounces up and down.

Reginald twists his head around and looks behind him. He sees a short muscular man with close-cropped black hair and a thin, cleft mustache at the back of the diving board. The man wears a one piece swimming outfit and his eyes gleam like green diamonds. His name is NATHAN.

REGINALD
(irritated)
You almost pitched me in.

NATHAN
It looks like you need some encouragement.

Nathan bounces once again upon the board; the overhanging end of the plank and Reginald swing up and down. The horizon swings up and down. Reginald grips the edges tightly: his knuckles are white; his face is bearded with sweat.

REGINALD
Stop. You're making me ill.

Nathan continues bouncing up and down on the board.

Reginald looks into Nathan's eyes; they are friendly but serious. The muscular man stops bouncing...as does the diving board.

NATHAN
You were ill long before I got here.

REGINALD
I get dizzy spells.

NATHAN
Sure pal. Sure you do.

Nathan bounces dramatically on the board; Reginald is airborne for a moment; his rear end SMACKS loudly upon the board.

REGINALD
Quit it!

Nathan STOMPS upon the board; the plank sinks beneath Reginald and rises to spank him with a loud SMACK. Nathan's eye glint mischievously.

NATHAN
Did you like that?

Reginald furtively surveys the MEN and WOMEN who populate the rooftop patio; nobody is watching.

REGINALD
Yes.

NATHAN
I thought that you might.

REGINALD
I need a drink.

NATHAN
I can tell.

INT. OSWALD'S CRAB HOUSE- AFTERNOON

The restaurant is an enormous hall with more than ninety tables, each set with napkin holders, pink napkins, off-white tablecloths and variegated utensils: forks, knives, spoons, nutcrackers and shell buckets. Between the hanging chandeliers are twenty-five gigantic metal fans, their blades spinning in a lazy circuits. Half of the tables are occupied with GUESTS.

Seated at an isolated table in the darkest corner of the establishment is a thirty-three year old man in a denuded tuxedo. He is a handsome, square-jawed fellow with a long face and a dimpled chin; his cheeks are coarse with three days growth and his eyes are dull and wet. His stares desultorily at the plate of untouched stone crab claws sitting before him, his mind far, far away. His name is CHARLES.

Beside the plate sits a card upon which is written:

'Charles,

I can't.

Carol'

A silver-haired WAITER wearing a button-up short-sleeve shirt, a black tie and black pants approaches Charles. Upon his tray is a tall glass with lemonade, topped with two multi-colored miniature umbrellas. The Waiter rests the glass on the table, beside the plate of stone crab claws.

WAITER
This is compliments of the ladies at table nine.

Charles looks up; the Waiter indicates a table ten yards away at which three WOMEN sit, waving to him.

CHARLES
Give them my thanks.

WAITER
I believe that they wish to join you.

Charles picks up the lemonade and hands it back to the Waiter; the silver-haired man accepts the glass and places it back upon the tray.

CHARLES
Send my apologies to those ladies, but I'm not up for socializing right now. I'm in a bad way.

Charles' desultory gaze returns...his mind wanders....

WAITER
Might I suggest that you eat those crab claws while they are still cold?

CHARLES
I'm not hungry. I thought I was, but I'm not.

WAITER
Shall I take them away?

CHARLES
No. Just let me look at them.

The Waiter, out of helpful suggestions, nods.

WAITER
Very good, sir.

The Waiter carries the lemonade away. Charles stares at the black-tipped stone crab claws, shaking his head. He brings his left hand to his face and massages his cheeks. He shuts his eyes.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS approaching disturbs Charles' reverie. He opens his eyes and looks up. A twenty three year-old WOMAN with a cheerful smile, curly blond hair and bright blue eyes stands before him.

WOMAN
Hi. My name is JoBeth.

Charles looks up.

CHARLES
Hello.

Charles returns his gaze to the black tips of the crab claws before him.

JOBETH
You're that guy from Philadelphia...the one whose bride...didn't show?

Charles nods.

JOBETH
(continuing)
You going back to Philly?

Charles shrugs.

JOBETH
(continuing)
Can I sit down?

CHARLES
I'm sorry, but I'm not inclined towards conversation right now.

JOBETH
I understand, but it helps to talk sometimes...especially to a stranger who won't judge you.

JoBeth pulls out a metal-framed chair and sits beside him.

Charles slides the metal plate of crab claws over to JoBeth.

CHARLES
Help yourself-- I'm not hungry.

JOBETH
You need to eat-- that'll help you get better.

Charles looks into JoBeth's bright eyes.

CHARLES
You're very young...and hopeful.

JoBeth smiles, unsure of exactly how this comment was meant.

JOBETH
I was in love once-- with a fellow named Richard. I thought we were going to get married, but we didn't. I thought I was going to die when he told me he was moving up north without me, but a few months later I felt fine.

CHARLES
Then you weren't in love.

JoBeth blinks at Charles' blunt response.

JOBETH
I was in love with him, but eventually...I wasn't. Talk to me, you'll feel better.

Charles nods, resigned.

CHARLES
I was supposed to marry Carol three days ago. Our families and our friends travelled down here from all over the country to see us exchange vows...I even had an aunt, an uncle and a great aunt come in on a steamer from England. I stood in front of these people- many of whom have known me since before I could even talk- and waited for my bride.

Charles shakes his head. JoBeth nods sympathetically.

CHARLES
(continuing)
For the next hour and a half, I watched concern and then sadness and ultimately pity overtake the faces of every single person I care for. My mother just stared at me, trying to smile while tears ran down her cheeks.

Charles grits his teeth for a moment; he balls his left hand into a fist and then exhales.

CHARLES
(continuing)
Carol did that...and still I would do anything to have her back. I would forgive her for being a coward, for shaming me in front of my family and for making my mother cry...even though I shouldn't. If she walked into this room right now I would not yell at her, I would not ask why she ran off- or even where she went- I would just hug her with my two arms and wish that I had ten more.

JoBeth's eyes sparkle with tears; she nods her head and stands up from the table. Charles turns his gaze back to the black tips of the stone crab claws.

CHARLES
(continuing)
Sorry...but I don't feel any better.

JoBeth walks away.

INT. MIAMI BEACH POLICE PRECINCT, MEETING AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

The west wall of the room is a series of green-hued glass shutters, the east wall is lined with gray filing cabinets, the south wall is covered with thumbtack postings and the north wall supports a gray chalkboard. An industrial fan ROARS from each corner of the room.

At the podium in front of the chalkboard stands a bald, sixty-two year old man named WHETSON. He addresses a group of thirty OFFICERS, aged twenty to sixty, dressed in both police uniforms and civilian garb.

WHETSON
Chief Lippino is expected to make a complete recovery, but will most likely retire after his convalescence. He has put in for Lieutenant William Kerrington to be made Chief of this squad.

A few Officers MUTTER; several shake their heads. Whetson eyeballs the malcontents for a moment before he resumes.

WHETSON
(continuing)
Kerrington, would you like to speak to the boys?

KERRINGTON
I would.

KERRINGTON, dressed in blue, stands up from his chair. He is a broad, copper and silver-haired man with a pointed nose, of average height and forty-five years. His greenish-blue eyes are surrounded by wrinkles; his mouth is a slender- almost invisible- line bisecting his jaw just below his mustache. He walks towards the front of the room.

Whetson sits down; Kerrington walks beside the podium and stops. He looks at his fellow officers for a moment and then toward the chalkboard. Upon it is written the word, 'Prohibition'; below that, partially erased but still legible is the word, 'STINKS'.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Cute. Real cute.

Kerrington walks over to the chalkboard, picks up an eraser and scrubs it against the word 'STINKS' until it is no longer legible. He turns to face the officers.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
The temperance movement is the law in this country and has been for nearly seven years. The time for debate on the subject is long gone. We are law enforcement officials-- we enforce the laws other people make. You want to argue, resign and go to law school.

Kerrington eyes the assembled men.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Any officer caught consuming even a thimbleful of alcohol will be fired, have his severance revoked and have his pension plan withheld if not negated altogether.

An unhappy MURMUR blows like a dark wind through the crowd.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Things have been lax in Miami Beach regarding prohibition. That will change. Detective Whetson and I have been compiling a list of possible speakeasy locations: within a short while we will organize raids and confine every single person we find occupying these establishments. That includes you, your friends, your wives and/or your girlfriends.

Disbelief registers upon the faces of the Officers.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
I know that Chief Lippino was your 'pal'-- he was everyones' 'pal', probably even that fellow who shot him twice in the kidney.

A Curly-Haired Man with a long nose opens his mouth to call out in anger, but decides against it.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
I am not your 'pal': I am your boss. You stand behind the law and in your personal lives, exemplify it. Go on out and do your goddam jobs. Dismissed.

The stunned Officers stand from the wooden chairs, their eyes wide with apprehension. Whetson stands up and walks over to Kerrington. The Officers file out, dumb and fearful.

WHETSON
(quietly)
Way to win them over, Kerrington.

Kerrington shrugs.

KERRINGTON
I wasn't trying to.

Whetson shakes his head in disapproval.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
My father taught me only one thing worth knowing: there is strength in hatred.

INT. KERRINGTON'S CAR - TWILIGHT

Amber sunlight glares upon the vehicle's two front window panes. Kerrington twists the key in the ignition lock and then presses the starter button; the engine RUMBLES to life. He grabs the lever nearest him, stomps the clutch, and shifts the vehicle into gear.

The car surges forward, towards the end of the parking lot. Kerrington spins the enormous wheel and rounds the corner. He looks out of his window: irate Patrolmen and plain-clothes Officers stand in front of the off-white, green-shuttered precinct. A few eye him and then quickly look away.

Kerrington accelerates onto a palm tree-lined road. He reaches into his lap and from it raises an unwieldy triple-decker sandwich, each layer a pile of roast beef, ham, turkey, bacon, lettuce, tomato and swiss cheese. He glances at the sandwich.

KERRINGTON
Christ.

He rests the sandwich in his lap, lifts off the top layer and brings it to his open mouth.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - TWILIGHT

The room is painted light blue and has a small window looking out upon downtown Miami. LIPPINO, sixty, white-haired and made of leather, lies in a slender bed book-ended by metal rails. Clear tubes run into his wrists from upended jars. He stares through the green-hued glass at the snail-shaped cars chugging up and down the road several stories below.

Kerrington enters the room holding a dampened brown paper bag. Lippino turns to face him.

KERRINGTON
Chief.

LIPPINO
Kerrington.

KERRINGTON
They get the slugs out?

LIPPINO
They did.

KERRINGTON
Good.

LIPPINO
Word about town is that you behaved like a self-righteous asshole in front of the boys today. Word has it you even took a dig or two at me and the way I do things.

KERRINGTON
I am visiting you in a hospital.

There is no mirth in Kerrington's remark.

LIPPINO
You are not a very nice man, are you?

KERRINGTON
You want the rest of my sandwich?

Kerrington raises the brown paper bag. Lippino waves it away.

LIPPINO
What are your plans, now that you officially have the steering wheel?

KERRINGTON
Enforce the law.

LIPPINO
How erudite.

KERRINGTON
You gave me the promotion, you know what to expect.

LIPPINO
Yeah, only I was expecting you to ease into it, not shit all over me and threaten the entire precinct.

Kerrington says nothing.

LIPPINO
(continuing)
Any news on what happened to that gal from Philly?

KERRINGTON
No. Davis and Fredricks are heading up the investigation.

Lippino nods.

LIPPINO
They'll find her. They're smart dicks.

There is a momentary silence in which both men look through the window, towards the burgeoning night lights of the Magic City.

KERRINGTON
I'll come by later in the week--
I've got to get home.

LIPPINO
Fine. You're not much of a conversationalist anyway.

Kerrington turns to leave.

LIPPINO
(continuing)
Before you skedaddle, I wanted to warn you off of one thing.

Kerrington's mouth becomes a thin line; he turns back and looks at Lippino, awaiting the admonition.

LIPPINO
(continuing)
Stumpy Stubbs is coming to town to throw his annual shindy. Don't harass him and certainly don't tussle with him. He's big, big money and the event is big business for the beach.

KERRINGTON
It's a grand party, I know. I remember that pair of fifteen year-old girls coming down to the station, complaining that they'd been doped-up, sodomized and coerced to perform certain acts upon a German shepherd for the entertainment of the 'partygoers'.

LIPPINO
Those gals dropped the charges.

KERRINGTON
Don't kid yourself-- money buried those charges.

LIPPINO
Yeah, well I had a talking to with Mr. Stubbs after that one. It's a more legit affair these days-- important people from all over come down for this party.

KERRINGTON
I have an idea who might be in attendance.

Lippino shakes his head; his eyes are as serious as cancer.

LIPPINO
No. You bust into that shindy, you'll be face to face with gangsters who tell the wops in New York and Chi-town when to shit. Guys who rewrote the book on mean. The things I've heard...

Lippino shudders and then shakes his head.

LIPPINO
(continuing)
Don't do it. Don't get our boys mixed up in something that'll get them killed...and maybe their families too. These gangsters don't live here and they're not our problem. Leave them alone.

Kerrington looks at Lippino, but says nothing.

LIPPINO
(continuing)
Don't.

KERRINGTON
I'll see you at the end of the week.

Kerrington turns and leaves.

EXT. KERRINGTON'S HOUSE - DUSK

A broad one-story house sits in a weedy lawn. The wooden panels adorning the edifice are a pale, faded yellow. A toppled bicycle lies beside the concrete slab that is the front deck; spotted orchids in wooden boxes dangle from the roof overhang.

Kerrington climbs out of his cyclopean green vehicle and walks toward the front door.

INT. LIVING/DINING ROOM, KERRINGTON HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

The room is panelled in wood and has a large Oriental rug, atop which an oval-shaped dining table stands. Two sliding-glass doors admit a view to the swimming pool and dog house in the backyard.

JOYCE, a tall and slender swan-like woman of thirty-eight years with straight blond hair, sits at the table, reading the newspaper, the Miami Gazette. Next to her sits her son, Eddie, the lanky ten year-old boy who earlier that day chased a crab across the beach. He reads a pulp magazine called 'True Detective' and scratches at the nascent scab upon his left knee. A door SLAMS.

EDDIE
(excited)
Dad's home!

A black Great Dane named JASPER storms into the room and BARKS. He HOWLS and then BARKS again.

JOYCE
Jasper!

The dog turns to look at Joyce.

JOYCE
(continuing)
Quiet!

The dog, not to be outdone, BARKS once more and then sits. Joyce looks at Eddie.

JOYCE
(continuing)
You'd better wash up for dinner.
Those pulps are filthy.

Eddie looks at his fingertips; they are stained with ink. He folds the corner of the page he is reading and shuts the magazine.

Kerrington enters the room; Eddie, grinning, beelines towards him. Kerrington drops to his knee and receives his son with open arms.

EDDIE
Dad!

Kerrington hugs his son and stands up, holding him against his barrel chest.

JOYCE
Don't touch your father's nice white shirt with those dirty little hands.

KERRINGTON
Don't nag him so much Joyce.

Joyce, annoyed by the remark, shakes her head.

JOYCE
His fingertips are covered with ink. I don't want to spend an hour trying to get stains out of your shirt.

EDDIE
But then you'll have my fingerprints on record!

Kerrington grins.

KERRINGTON
You'd better wash up before mom gets steamed.

Kerrington sets Eddie down; the boy runs happily from the room. The Police Chief loosens his gray tie.

JOYCE
I wish you wouldn't do that.

Kerrington stops loosening his tie.

KERRINGTON
You want me to keep it on? We having company tonight?

JOYCE
That's not what I'm talking about. You always do the same thing-- you undermine my authority in front of Eddie...there's no wonder why I can't keep a handle on him in public. I make a reasonable request like, 'Go wash your hands,' and somehow I'm a 'nag'.

KERRINGTON
So what's for dinner?

Joyce shakes her head.

JOYCE
Please show me at least a little respect in front of our son. I know your father never showed your mother any, but I want this household to be different.

Kerrington eyes his wife in an unfriendly way. He takes off his tie and unbuttons his collar.

KERRINGTON
That was uncalled for, Joyce.

JOYCE
Well, so was whatever you said to the boys at the precinct today. Three wives called me to cancel plans not more than an hour afterwards. Sounds like you were quite a tyrant.

KERRINGTON
You're just full of opinions this evening aren't you?

Kerrington and Joyce glare at each other for a moment.

JOYCE
When your crusading ostracizes us from our only social circle, I am.

Kerrington looks away from his wife, walks by the sofa, picks up the Miami Gazette, and sits down at the table.

KERRINGTON
I am not defending myself in my own home. Not tonight, not ever.

Kerrington opens the paper with a SNAP. Joyce shakes her head and leaves the room.

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room, illumined by a tan table lamp, is wallpapered with a light blue pattern peppered with navy blue dots. Shelves filled with pulp magazines cover one wall and a dresser lines another. Above the narrow bed hangs a plaque with a miniature magnifying glass and a brass header reading, 'Junior Detective, First Runner-Up'. Eddie lies in his bed, the covers pulled up to his chest; his eyes are wide in anticipation. Kerrington sits beside him holding a pulp book entitled, 'Ghastly Crime' in his hands.

Kerrington's eyes scan the first few lines of the story.

KERRINGTON
This might be a little too intense for you, buster.

Eddie shakes his head.

EDDIE
No it's not, I swear. Harold read it and said it was boss-- he traded it to me for that big sandwich mom made.

KERRINGTON
No wonder you ate so much at dinner. I thought maybe you were pregnant.

EDDIE
I'm a boy-- I can't get pregnant!

Kerrington grins and then nods.

KERRINGTON
I'll read you a little bit, but if you start to get scared just tell me and I'll read you another story.

Kerrington pats his son's foot through the pin-striped blanket.

EDDIE
I'll be okay-- it didn't scare Harold.

KERRINGTON
Well I don't want you turning mean like him.

EDDIE
I won't. I promise.

Kerrington reaches into his shirt pocket and fishes out his reading glasses. He rests them on his nose and then clears his throat.

KERRINGTON
'The Rancid City, by L. W. Haeff. Garbage cans bulging with the green-hued gases of putrefaction line the black tar streets of eastern Jacktown. Within these cans is noisome offal, fouler by far than the longest neglected charnel house. The garbage has not been picked up for six weeks. When the wind blows, the funereal smell wafts into western Jacktown and women with sensitive dispositions are given to retching. A man named Maxwell Von Diechen smells his dead wife, but he does not recognize her, so deftly woven into the malodorous tapestry is her mephitic weft.'

From beneath the blanket, Eddie extricates a denuded stuffed bear. He hugs it to his chest and listens to his father, enthralled.

INT. KERRINGTON'S BEDROOM - LATER

The lights are out. Kerrington lies in a wide bed beside Joyce; they are both asleep. The door to the room slowly opens, accompanied by a dim CREAK. Light spills into the room, illuminating dressers, a standing wardrobe, a vanity, a bookshelf and a slowly spinning ceiling fan. Kerrington's eyelids flutter open; he tilts his head up and looks towards the door. Eddie stands in the hallway looking in, holding his stuffed bear.

EDDIE
I'm scared.

Kerrington slides over and lifts the blanket; Eddie scrambles over to his father and climbs into the bed beside him.

INT. THE LION, HOTEL LOBBY - SAME

The spacious lobby is of marble and glass, all in yellow, gold and brown hues. Pillars in a Greco-Roman style line the enclosure and a wide reception desk with fluted support legs sits like an impresario in the center of the far wall. The stone bust of a lion silently roars at the center of the table. Behind this beast sits a young raven-haired woman, the RECEPTIONIST, staring through the lightly frosted glass doors towards the moonlit beach. Beside her slouches a tired African American male of seventeen years, a bellhop named TURNIP-TOE, dressed in a yellow suit and a flat yellow cap.

The front doors open and through them comes a very tan, balding man of fifty with a dyed black mustache...and possibly a little mascara. His throat is swollen by an enormous goiter and his eyes are protuberant to an almost comical degree. He wears a gorgeous white linen suit and carries himself with casual confidence. He is IGNACIO THE FROG.

Upon seeing Ignacio the Frog, the Receptionist corrects her posture and Turnip-Toe stands up straight.

IGNACIO THE FROG
(very deep bass voice)
Buenas noches, friends.

RECEPTIONIST
Good evening.

TURNIP-TOE
Buenas noches.

Ignacio the Frog approaches the front counter, a friendly smile on his face. He looks at the Receptionist.

IGNACIO THE FROG
You are looking very bonita tonight.

The Receptionist smiles. Ignacio looks over at Turnip-Toe.

IGNACIO THE FROG
(continuing)
How is your mother doing?

TURNIP-TOE
Her fever gone down.

IGNACIO THE FROG
I am glad to hear this. Very glad.

Ignacio the Frog reaches into his pocket and withdraws a roll of bills; he pulls two tens out of the cylindrical stack and rests one on the counter before the Receptionist and one before Turnip-Toe.

IGNACIO THE FROG
(continuing)
A little holiday bonus for my amigos.

RECEPTIONIST
Thank you Ignacio.

TURNIP-TOE
Thank you sir.

Ignacio shakes his head.

IGNACIO THE FROG
I am not a sir-- that is some pompous Englishman with a powdered wig. I am Ignacio...or Ignacio the Frog if you prefer to distinguish me from that other Ignacio who is a lying snake and a faggot.

TURNIP-TOE
Thank you Ignacio.

IGNACIO THE FROG
You are most welcome my friend, most welcome.

Ignacio pokes a chubby index finger inside the stone lion's right eye. A dim BUZZ sounds in some far-off enclosure.

Ignacio the Frog trains his bulbous eyes on the Receptionist.

IGNACIO THE FROG
(continuing)
Has this night been busy?

RECEPTIONIST
It has. There are ninety-two people in the back.

Ignacio's eyes brighten.

IGNACIO THE FROG
Noventidos? In the middle of the week?

(more)

IGNACIO THE FROG (cont'd)
(nodding)
Bueno, bueno. This makes me very glad I left the sugar industry.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LION, SPEAKEASY - MOMENTS LATER

Dice CLATTER across the floor of the wood-panelled barroom. MEN stand in a circle, their suit jackets discarded, their shirtsleeves rolled up and their ties flung over their shoulders like the tongues of tired dogs; WOMEN watch with mild interest. Each person holds a drink in his or her hand-- a mug, a cognac glass, a cocktail glass, a shot glass...

An African American jazz band works a six/eight shuffle in the corner: the skinny twenty-year-old TRUMPETER punctuating the sultry line the teenage BASS PLAYER weaves atop the tempo hammered out by the smiling fifty-year-old DRUMMER.

The door opens. All eyes glance up at the door atop the steps. Ignacio the Frog enters. A few people wave affably towards him; the festivities are quickly rejoined.

Upon brilliantly glossy black leather loafers, Ignacio walks down the six wooden steps into the smoky enclosure, surveying the ninety-two guests; he nods, pleased with himself. He walks over to the bar, a varnished mahogany slab. The BARTENDER, a tall thin man with an enormous hooked nose, black curly hair and a slender mustache, nods to him.

IGNACIO THE FROG
Where are my girls?

BARTENDER
They're busy-- Stumpy Stubbs' shindy is bringing in randy reprobates from all over.

IGNACIO THE FROG
Where's Loraline?

BARTENDER
The Penthouse.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LION, PENTHOUSE SUITE - SAME

The suite is a supernal nexus of high arches, silken curtains and curvilinear furniture, all of which are adjacent shades of creamy off-white.

White wooden fan blades spin on the ceiling in liquid and silent circuits; the balcony doors are open, admitting a salt water breeze from outside. The room is lit by candles and the low, luminous half moon outside.

The four-poster bed in the center of the room is occupied by Loraline and a dumpy, sunburnt sixty year-old man named MICKEY. Loraline is wearing a vanilla-colored silk robe and her silver high-heeled sandals; Mickey is wearing his trunks and a slightly discolored undershirt. He lies astride her, yet leans his weight almost entirely upon his right elbow; his left hand is under her robe, fondling her right breast.

MICKEY
You are so beautiful, Loraline. I'm sure that all of the guys tell you that, but it has to be said. I love your blond hair-- it's real classy. Some guys like brunettes, but not me, I like my girls pure.

Mickey tilts his head down and presses his lips to her neck. He kisses her gently. SMECK.

LORALINE
You are so romantic, Mickey.

Emboldened by the complement, he raises his face before hers.

MICKEY
May I kiss you on the mouth this time?

Loraline points to her cheek, right next to her lips.

LORALINE
You may kiss me here.

Mickey presses his lips against Loraline's cheek and then shuts his eyes. While kissing her, he gently squeezes her breast beneath her robe. He SIGHS. Loraline grins.

Mickey raises his head and opens his eyes.

MICKEY
I know we've only spent two evenings together, but I think that I'm falling for you.
(moistening his lips)
May we?

Loraline nods.

LORALINE
My diaphragm is already in. Would you like for me to straddle you again?

MICKEY
I would.

Mickey lies on his back. Loraline sits up and places her hand upon the protuberance in Mickey's trunks. He looks a little nervous.

LORALINE
You've got a brontosaurus in there, haven't you?

MICKEY
You've seen it before.

LORALINE
And every time I am amazed.

Mickey relaxes. Loraline unfastens the buttons on his trunks.

Titlecard: Boston

EXT. O'HALLORAN WAY - MIDNIGHT

Snow drifts from the sky, each flake buoyed by the conflicting swirls of the winter winds. White accrues on the red brick street and on the overhangs topping the three-sided bay windows that jut from the surrounding brownstones. Very few lights are on within the apartments. Two street lamps glow like yellow moons at either end of the avenue.

RICHARD, wearing a tweed suit, and BEATRICE, a woman in an artful evening gown, stare at each other beneath the southern lamp, the light putting dollops of gold upon their heads and the bridges of their noses. They are in their early twenties and enthralled with each other. Their warm respirations mists between them...a visible veil of affection.

BEATRICE
You are so handsome. I can't believe how...how lucky I am. Any woman would die to be standing here right now...looking at you and being looked at by you...that way.

Richard blushes.

RICHARD
My father said that we could stay at his place out on the Cape this-

A SKIDDING, SCREECHING, ROARING car SLAMS into the couple.

Richard's head CRACKS against the hood, Beatrice is thrown towards a stoop on the opposite side of the road, and into a row of garbage cans.

The car CRASHES into the light post. Steam HISSES from the crumpled hood; valves SKIRL like sickly bagpipes. The DRIVER staggers out...the broad, paunchy fellow holds a bottle of wine in his hand. He looks around and then brings the bottle to his lips, unconcerned with the carnage.

Richard, his skull cracked open and profusely bleeding, begins to convulse.

Snowflakes...drift...inside...his...split...head.

INT. BOSTON TWELFTH PRECINCT, RECEIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The receiving area is off-white, with dark wooden cornices, wainscotting and trim. Behind the imposing front desk, upon a chair as tall as a bar stool, sits a red-nosed, pock-marked OFFICER, listening to the telephone receiver pressed to his ear.

OFFICER
Yeah...I'll do it. I'll relay the news to him.

With a tremulous hand, the Officer lowers the earpiece into the cradle. He inhales deeply and then slowly EXHALES.

A Chinese JANITOR in a beige cleaning uniform walks into the room, pushing a rectangular tin bucket on SQUEAKY wheels by the handle of the protruding mop. He looks up at the Officer.

JANITOR
What's the matter?

OFFICER
The Mayor's son...was just run over...and killed. The driver was drunk...and is connected.

The Janitor shakes his head.

JANITOR
A drunken mobster killed Mayor 'Firebrand' Wilson's son?

The Officer nods his head; the Janitor WHISTLES.

The Officer picks up the earpiece and brings it alongside his head. He spins the dial, WHISK.

OFFICER
Yes operator, this is Police Precinct Twelve. I need to be put through to Mayor Radford Wilson's residence...it's an emergency.
(he listens)
Yes, I'll hold.

JANITOR
There's gonna be a war.

The Officer covers over the conical mouthpiece with the palm of his hand and addresses the Janitor.

OFFICER
If the crimelords know what's wise, they'll get the hell out and set up shop someplace else. Prohibition just became very goddamn serious in Beantown.

INT. WAREHOUSE - ONE IN THE MORNING

Eight bare light bulbs hang and glare from the corrugated steel ceiling of the warehouse. Wooden crates and cardboard boxes are stacked five, six and seven high throughout the space. Five fair-skinned MOBSTERS, each wearing a brimmed hat and an iridescent suit, stand in a half circle, looking down at two prisoners lying upon the floor, each of whom has been stripped to his long underwear, fettered with rope and handcuffed. The prostrated men- a FATHER and a SON- shiver; each shuddering respiration is a visible steam cloud.

The central mobster is a lithe man of fifty with short white hair, a thin gray mustache and differently colored eyes (green and blue). His name is DANIEL.

DANIEL
They look cold.

One of the mobsters, a huge twenty-five year old man with a small head and abraded knuckles the size of golf balls, walks over to and kneels before the shivering men upon the floor; his broad shadow envelops them. His name is MURCHENKO.

Daniel glances to the three Mobsters standing alongside him and nods his head. The broad-shouldered trio walks towards an opened crate ten yards up the aisle. They reach inside and extract empty liquor bottles.

Daniel puts his fingers in his ears.

A Mobster casts down an empty vessel; it CRASHES upon the concrete floor. The Father and Son flinch as the liquor bottle erupts into a welter of scintillating shards. Another bottle is cast down. CRASH. Followed by more...CRASH, CRASH, CRASH, CRASH.

The overhead light catches upon the broken glass as if it were a lost constellation. The trio of Mobsters stomp upon the glass shards, CRUNCHING them into finer fragments. CRUNCH...CRUNCH...CRUNCH...

Murchenko squeezes his temples with his huge left hand and then shakes his head; he then scrapes his knuckles against the concrete floor. The surface of the skin over his swollen knuckles is peppered with scabs and tiny droplets of blood.

DANIEL
(continuing; to the Father and Son)
Murchenko gets this lancing pain in his head. When he punches things, he feels better. Don't know why, but he does.

Nearby, the trio continues to grind the broken glass down; their footsteps eliciting dim CRUNCHING sounds. Murchenko raps his knuckles against the concrete floor; CRACK, CRACK, CRACK, CRACK.

Daniel turns his mismatched eyes to the three Mobsters atop the glass; the shards are now ground into pieces roughly the size of rice grains.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Beantown mouthwash.

The prisoners are riven with terror: the Son vomits upon the floor; tears run unchecked from the Father's eyes.

The three Mobsters pull on thick canvas gloves and then slide their covered hands into the shards of glass...as if they were children preparing to make snowballs. Carrying coruscating mounds of ground glass, the trio approaches the Father and Son.

Murchenko grabs the Son's face, digging his thick fingers into the young man's cheeks...forcing his mouth open. The Son flails wildly, but Murchenko's grip is as unyielding as iron.

The first member of the trio pours the ground glass into the Son's opened, upturned mouth. Murchenko shuts the Son's jaw and holds it closed. Teeth grind upon glass...the Son tries not to swallow. With his other hand, Murchenko pinches the Son's lips shut.

Daniel steps forward, a broad, gray industrial stapler in his hand. He clamps the Son's lips between the top and bottom of the device and squeezes.

THUNK. A shrill SCREAM, cut short by a horrible wet choking sound comes from the young man. His body shakes. Daniel staples his lips again...THUNK...and again...THUNK.

The Father ROARS in Italian, his face red with rage, his lips trailing webs of saliva. The two Mobsters- still cradling glass in their hands- step on the old man, firmly pressing their heels into his neck, chest and groin.

The Mobster who poured glass into the Son's mouth picks the terrified young man up by the back of his collar.

Blood trickles in rivulets from the staples holding the Son's mouth shut; his eyes are wide and mad. Murchenko stands up in front of the young man, towering over him.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Work him over.

Murchenko punches the Son in the face, his golf-ball sized knuckles connecting with a CRACK as loud as a gun shot. Blood sprays in dual gouts from the young man's nostrils.

The Father SOBS. Daniel yawns, covering his mouth with the back of his left hand.

FATHER
Don't...please don't hurt our families.

DANIEL
We are going to hurt you. We are going to kill them.

Murchenko punches the Son again. CRACK. Blood and bits of pink and yellow flesh spray through his nostrils and SPLATTER upon the concrete floor. Amidst the gore are several scintillating shards of glass.

Titlecard: In or Abutting Miami Beach

EXT. THE BEACH - DAWN

Eddie and Harold scamper up the shore; each is barefoot and wearing swimming trunks. The horizon line is a slash of pink separating the royal-blue sky from the turquoise-blue water.

EDDIE
I hope it's still there!

HAROLD
It will be.

The boys continue to jog up the beach, gasping yet thrilled with anticipation.

EDDIE
I see it, I see it!

The boys run as fast as they can.

HAROLD
Oh no, oh no!

The two boys come upon a group of misshapen lumps in the sand, within which a toppled tower and a bumpy courtyard are partially visible. A few sticks jut from the shapeless mass like silent mourners.

Harold SCREAMS and then points up the beach. Eddie looks in the indicated direction and sees a woman's corpse...which is actually a life-sized sand sculpture of a nude woman. The figure's mouth is opened in a horrible cry of agony: sharpened sticks jut from her forehead, her neck, her left breast, her stomach and her right thigh.

Harold is sickened by the sight. Eddie ponders the grim tableau.

HAROLD
(continuing)
I want to go.

EDDIE
I bet whoever made that messed up our castle. I wish I had my magnifying glass.

INT. MIAMI TROLLEY - NOON

Stumpy Stubbs, wearing a pink shirt and beige shorts, sits beside his nineteen year-old admirer Madeline, clad in a yellow sundress and matching hat; she reads a newspaper. The couple sits in the center of the horse-drawn trolley.

Upon the varnished wooden bench immediately before them sits IRISH, a black Scottish Terrier with a haughty disposition. At the front of the mint green and royal blue vehicle, sits the COACHMASTER, an octogenarian missing all but three teeth, yet still inclined towards smiling as he handles the four horses before him.

Madeline shakes her head as she reads an article in the Miami Gazette.

MADELINE
I feel so badly for that man left standing at the altar.
(she looks at Stumpy)
Would you invite him to the shindy...to cheer him up?

STUMPY STUBBS
Sure. It's good to have a sucker to make fun of in case my routine bombs.

Madeline shoves Stumpy, playfully. The trolley slows. Stumpy leans to the window and looks outside. He turns to Madeline and winks.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
This will be a hoot.

The door to the trolley opens. An AFRICAN AMERICAN family dressed in servant clothing climbs up the steps into the trolley, followed by a YOUNG COUPLE, smartly dressed in leisure apparel.

The African American family walks toward Irish, Stumpy Stubbs and Madeline, heading for the rear of the trolley. Stumpy nods to them and smiles; they nod amicably in reply and continue past him toward the back. The pale, well-heeled Young Couple approaches; the Young Man's eyes light upon Stumpy, widening in surprise.

YOUNG MAN
It's Stumpy Stubbs! In Miami Beach!

The Young Woman looks at Stumpy; her face is swallowed by a lunar grin.

YOUNG WOMAN
(to her beau)
Get a pen, get a pen!

They hasten towards Stumpy; the famous film comedian stares at the newspaper in his lap, pretending not to notice them. The Young Man draws a pen from his vest; the Young Woman takes an envelope out of her purse. Madeline watches the effervescing couple with thorough amusement.

YOUNG MAN
Pardon me Mr. Stubbs.

Stumpy looks up from his paper; his large eyes grow wide in mock surprise.

STUMPY STUBBS
Oh! Hello there.

Irish observes the couple and SNORTS.

YOUNG MAN
We're real big fans of yours--
we've seen all of your movies at
least twice-- would you please
sign this for us?

The Young Man snatches the envelope from his girlfriend and proffers it and the pen to Stumpy.

STUMPY STUBBS
I'm sorry, what would you like?

YOUNG MAN
Your autograph.

Irish BARKS and then BITES the Young Man's hand.

STUMPY STUBBS
Irish!

The Young Man- shaking his bitten hand- backs away, his sweetheart alongside him. Irish jumps down from the bench and runs at the couple, BARKING angrily.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
He's mad as hell now-- you'd
better get away from him.

The Young Man and Woman nod in unison and retreat to the front of the trolley. Irish BARKS once more, to clarify his superiority. He turns and scampers back over to Stumpy Stubbs.

Madeline puts her hand over her mouth and quietly GIGGLES.

MADELINE
How'd you make him do that?

STUMPY STUBBS
He's trained to attack anybody who says the word...
(whispering)
'autograph.'

Irish looks up at Stumpy Stubbs, suspicious.

EXT. THE OCEAN - LATE DAY

Reginald and Nathan, the duo who met on the rooftop diving board, tread water half a mile off of the shoreline. Reginald's hair is still- somehow- oiled back; each of Nathan's muscular shoulders is decorated with a tattoo: an anchor and a mermaid.

REGINALD
You have a very nice physique.

NATHAN
Do you always talk like a doctor?

REGINALD
Are you always this difficult?
Give me the bottle.

NATHAN
You've had enough. I don't want you to pass out like you did yesterday when I was fucking you.

REGINALD
Give me the bottle.

Nathan lifts his right hand from beneath the veil of undulating turquoise-blue; clasped within his strong fingers is an unlabeled liquor bottle. He shakes it, causing its amber contents to slosh about.

NATHAN
What would you do for a taste?

REGINALD
I'll let you fuck me again, how's that?

NATHAN
You were going to do that anyway.

REGINALD
Well, what would you like in exchange for a taste?

NATHAN
A secret. Something you've never told anyone.

Reginald and Nathan stare at each other and bob like handsome buoys; the ocean breathes around them.

REGINALD
I've always fantasized about being raped.

NATHAN
I can tell.

Nathan, his eyes glinting like cold green diamonds, tosses Reginald the bottle.

INT. MIAMI BEACH POLICE PRECINCT, KERRINGTON'S OFFICE - TWILIGHT

Kerrington, in uniform, sits behind a wide wooden desk which barely fits inside his mint green office. A small table fan CLATTERS noisily next to the telephone, streaming tinsel. The frosted door to the office is open; upon its pane, partially obscuring the name of the previous inhabitant, is a sheet of paper with only the name 'Kerrington' written upon it. Sixty-two year old Detective Whetson stands in front of the desk, looking over a yellow piece of paper in his hands; he is dismayed.

WHETSON
This is...a very aggressive itinerary you've proposed.

KERRINGTON
If things go as I presume, we won't need to carry out all fifty-seven.

WHETSON
I hope you're right.

KERRINGTON
I want to know whether you think the order of the raids is correct.

WHETSON
I agree with the way you've ordered them.
(more)

WHETSON (cont'd)
Storm the easy spots first so word will spread and the tough joints will be vacated prior to our arrival.

KERRINGTON
That's my hope, anyway. You and I lead two of the seven strikes happening tonight.

Whetson nods. Kerrington opens the top drawer in his desk and from it takes out his revolver. He CLICKS the chamber open and spins it. WHIZZZZ.

WHETSON
I guess this conversation is over?

KERRINGTON
It is.

WHETSON
Well, I'll see you in a few-- I'm gonna catch a dozen winks before we're on.

Kerrington eyes the slots in the chamber; Whetson turns around and walks towards the door.

KERRINGTON
Three whiskey bootleggers named you as a their lookout.

Kerrington spins the chamber of his revolver. WHIZZZZZZ. Whetson raises his hand to the doorknob and grabs it. He does not turn around to face Kerrington nor does he leave.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
You're a good and smart man Whetson: through the years, you and I have trumped two tons of ugly on the beach and in the Magic City.

WHETSON
We have.

KERRINGTON
What illicit deeds were done under Lippino I'll take no offense over: what you do from this day forward I will hold you entirely accountable for. I'm giving you a chance...but if you shit on my shoes, I will crucify you with the bluntest nails I can find.

Whetson, trembling, turns to Kerrington.

WHETSON
Thank you, Bill.

Whetson grabs the doorknob, twists it, pulls the door wide and departs. Kerrington blows into the barrel of his gun and eyes the rifling inside.

INT. THE LION, HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

The raven-haired Receptionist and Turnip-Toe sit behind the lion's head-surmounted front desk. Turnip-Toe, dressed in his yellow bellhop uniform, is squeezing the toes of his right foot through his shoes. Four MEN walk through the frosted glass doors and into the lobby. They are all in their fifties, pale and overweight, with one skinny, red-necked, white-bearded exception.

SKINNY
(southern accent)
A kike and a nigger. Where's the thieving gypsy to round out this muddy trio?

RECEPTIONIST
I'm not a Jew.

SKINNY
If you were a man you could pull it out and prove me wrong...but I guess I'll just have to take your word for it.

The rotund Men bubble with LAUGHTER. The Receptionist presses her lips tightly together; Turnip-Toe looks angrily at the approaching quartet.

SKINNY
(continuing)
We got a room here. Twelve rooms actually.

The Receptionist CLEARS her throat; Turnip-Toe glares at the Men, but says nothing.

SKINNY
(continuing; to Turnip-Toe)
Don't you dare eyeball me like that, boy. Time was when a coon was lynched for such a thing.

ROTUND MAN
I miss those days.

The Men LAUGH again.

RECEPTIONIST
What name is it under?

SKINNY
(turns to his companions)
What name did we use, boys?

ROTUND MAN
Smith, I think.

SKINNY
(to the Receptionist)
We're the Smiths, first to arrive in a group of fifty. We're all named Smith-- an astonishing coincidence when you think about it.

The Men TITTER. The Receptionist opens the leather guest book affixed to the table, turning the giant pages to the present day.

SKINNY
(continuing)
Have you got a gal in your employ- preferably a white one- who can stitch and iron? We've got some robes and hoods that need tending to.

Turnip-Toe balls his hands into fists, gets up and leaves the lobby.

RECEPTIONIST
It will be taken care of.

SKINNY
You got any of those special Florida postcards-- the ones where an alligator chases a nigger up a coconut tree?

RECEPTIONIST
We stopped selling those. The new boss considered them in poor taste.

SKINNY
That's a shame. My granddaughter just loves them.

The Men LAUGH. The Receptionist grinds her jaw in anger.

INT. BLUE FLAMINGO, LOBBY - LATER

The wide restaurant lobby is carpeted in royal blue; the walls are an alternation of white and blue stripes. A blue-tinted glass sculpture of a flamingo sits in a basin in the center of the room; at the blue glass table nearby sits a CHIPPER FELLOW of thirty years in a fine light blue suit.

Through the open door walks Charles; his wedding tuxedo has deteriorated from denuded to fraying and his beard is a bit thicker than it was at the crab house.

CHIPPER FELLOW
Good evening sir and welcome to the Blue Flamingo, the finest continental cuisine in all of South Florida. Have you a reservation?

Charles walks toward the Chipper Fellow.

CHARLES
I'm here to get drunk.

The Chipper Fellow appraises Charles and then nods.

CHIPPER FELLOW
Go through the restaurant and proceed to the men's room. There are three bathroom stalls, go to the third door, knock four times, wait, knock three more times and say-

CUT TO:

INT. BLUE FLAMINGO, RESTAURANT BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CHARLES
I'm here to examine that plugged-up commode.

The small bathroom is tiled in a blue-and-black checkerboard pattern; the three stalls are painted sky blue. Charles hears a RUSTLING sound behind the stall door.

CLACK. The door opens. Within the stall stands a small man with an oily face and a CLEFT LIP. Behind him- where the toilet and water tank should be- stands an unpainted, unfinished wooden door.

CLEFT LIP
Get in. Close the stall door behind you.

Charles enters the stall and shuts the door.

CLEFT LIP
(continuing)
Lock it.

Charles runs the bolt across. CLACK.

CLEFT LIP
(continuing)
Ain't got no tolerance for shenanigans or japery. You like to jape, you like shenanigans?

CHARLES
I'm here to get drunk.

The man nods and then opens the thick wooden door. The sounds of conversation and LAUGHTER fill the stall.

INT. BLUE FLAMINGO, SPEAKEASY - MOMENTS LATER

Set in what was once a storage room, the speakeasy is furnished with variegated stools, mismatched tables and a billiard table, the green felt of which has been riven several times. Thirty PEOPLE sit in clusters, largely segregated by gender and race.

Cleft Lip points to a wan man of nearly sixty years, standing beside two rusty, forest-green filing cabinets.

CLEFT LIP
That's the bartender.

Charles raises an eyebrow and walks towards SAUL THE BARTENDER.

CHARLES
I'm here to get drunk.

SAUL THE BARTENDER
You that guy from Philly-- the one who was left at the altar?

CHARLES
I am.

The bartender slides open the top drawer of the filing cabinet- which ROARS noisily on its rusted runner- and withdraws a broad glass. He shuts the drawer and summarily opens the middle drawer- which also ROARS- and plucks out a few ice cubes from the bucket within; he tosses the rocks into the glass; they CLANK and spin like marbles. He shuts the middle drawer and opens the bottom drawer: it is crammed full of unlabeled liquor bottles.

SAUL THE BARTENDER
What's your preference?

CHARLES
Something fatal.

Saul withdraws a bottle thoroughly crosshatched with scratches; the vessel is half-filled with a dark amber fluid. He uncorks the bottle, splashes the potation on the ice and hands it over to Charles.

Charles sniffs the booze and takes a sip. He blinks several times as the liquid sears his sinuses.

CHARLES
(continuing)
I think I know what killed the Indians.

Charles takes another sip.

CHARLES
(continuing)
What kind of firewater is this?

SAUL THE BARTENDER
I'm not exactly sure-- none of these bottles have labels.

Saul looks at the scratched bottle and squints.

SAUL THE BARTENDER
(continuing)
Something dark.

Charles takes another sip; his ears, nose and cheeks redden. Saul sets the bottle down upon the green felt.

SAUL THE BARTENDER
(continuing)
Do you know why she did it?

CHARLES
I do not.

SAUL THE BARTENDER
If my wife did that to me, I'd whip her good. You going ring her neck when they find her?

CHARLES
I love her.

SAUL THE BARTENDER
Still?

CHARLES
Still.

Saul shakes his head.

SAUL THE BARTENDER
That drink is on the house.

CHARLES
Do you love your wife?

SAUL THE BARTENDER
I suppose I do. We've been married thirty-six years-- what choice do I have?

The door to the speakeasy BURSTS open.

Kerrington, Detective Whetson, and four uniformed OFFICERS storm inside, guns drawn though not raised. Three DRINKERS fall out of their stools; the rest eye the raiders nervously.

KERRINGTON
Drinks down, hands in the air.

Glasses are set upon tables; hands with splayed fingers rise in the air.

KERRINGTON
(continuing; loudly)
Follow Detective Whetson to the wagon. Everyone here is going for a ride down to the station.

The speakeasy denizens GRUMBLE and MUTTER, but slowly walk towards Whetson.

WHETSON
Follow me boys.

Kerrington walks towards Charles and Saul the Bartender. Kerrington points his gun at the bottom drawer of the file cabinet.

KERRINGTON
Pour them out. All of them.

The bartender pulls out a bottle and upends it; amber fluid spills and SPLATS upon the cement.

CHARLES
(to Kerrington)
Would you mind shooting me while you have that thing out?

Kerrington looks at the wan, abandoned groom and shakes his head.

KERRINGTON
This isn't how you should deal with your grief Mr. Harrison-- it'll only prolong it and make it worse.

CHARLES
Thanks for the advice.

KERRINGTON
Get in the wagon with the rest of the reprobates.

Charles walks toward the column of people filed before Detective Whetson.

KERRINGTON
(continuing; to the bartender)
Two bottles at a time.

Saul grabs another bottle, uncorks it and drains it concurrent with the first.

SAUL THE BARTENDER
Why don't you just shoot the bottles? Or smash them?

KERRINGTON
Gunshots and broken glass excite people. I run a calm operation. Now shut up.

The booze spills in lazy rills to the floor...

CUT TO:

INT. ALLEYWAY - LATER

Kerrington, Whetson and three OFFICERS wait beside a dumpster in a darkened alleyway. A metal door stands just beyond them, leading into the back office of a warehouse. Light and muted conversation and music slink under the door, into the alleyway, accompanied by an errant curl of smoke. A twenty-four year old officer named STANLEY adjusts his glasses and then waves his hand in front of his nose.

STANLEY
(whispered)
Stinks back here.

Kerrington and Whetson exchange irritated glances and then derisively eye Stanley; the young man shuts his mouth...tightly.

Kerrington and Whetson withdraw their pistols, followed by Stanley. The two remaining Officers- both broad capable fellows- lift sledgehammers in their hands and approach the door.

The first Officer hefts his sledgehammer over his head, as if going for a prize in a carnival contest; the second Officer positions his sledgehammer on his meaty shoulder as if he were up at bat in a baseball game.

KERRINGTON
(whispered)
Do it.

The first hammer falls, tearing the doorknob and lock from their housing in a CRUNCHING cacophony of steel and bolts. The second hammer impacts the door itself, connecting with an explosive CRACK.

The door flies open; an oblong of yellow light spills into the alleyway. Kerrington, Whetson and Stanley storm the entrance.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
It's that fink Whetson!

BANG.

A bullet lances Whetson's throat, bursting from the back of his neck like a crimson comet; he pitches forward, shocked and numb.

Stanley CRIES out and points his gun inside. Kerrington aims and fires through the open door. BLAM. BLAM. BLAM.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRIVATE SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT

Loraline, wearing a black one piece bathing suit and a swimming cap over her blond hair, SPLASHES into the crystalline blue water of an eighty-foot swimming pool abutting a rectilinear Deco mansion. She rises from the bottom and surges forward; her strong arms and legs propel her effortlessly through the water.

A tawny forty year-old man with silver hair and a handsome face watches Loraline from a nearby chair. He wears a short-sleeved linen shirt and white bermuda shorts; in his upturned left hand is a snifter of cognac. His name is ANTHONY.

ANTHONY
(Brooklyn accent)
You know how to swim.

Loraline reaches the end of the pool nearest Anthony.

LORALINE
I had lessons when I was a girl.
Singing and dancing lessons to.

Loraline shoves off of the pool wall, the water foaming about her like a lace gown.

LORALINE
(continuing)
I was supposed to be an entertainer.

Anthony tilts his head at an angle, bemused.

ANTHONY
You certainly have the looks for it.
(he sips his cognac)
Shall I join you in there?

Loraline looks over her shoulder as she swims away.

LORALINE
It's your pool.

ANTHONY
I wasn't asking permission-- I wanted to know your preference.

She reaches the far end of the pool and grabs on to the wooden ladder, pondering the question put to her.

LORALINE
I'd like to swim by myself for a while...if you don't mind.

ANTHONY
Not at all.

Loraline inhales deeply and ducks below the water. Anthony, smirking, watches her descend.

She surges up and begins another lap, slow and languid. She closes her eyes...and remembers.

INT. LIVING/DINING ROOM, KERRINGTON HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Mother and son sit next to each other upon the sofa. Joyce stares at a newspaper, though it is clear that she is distracted; Eddie looks up from his pulp and observes his mother's desultory state.

EDDIE
What's the matter?

Joyce smiles weakly and shakes her head.

JOYCE
Nothing, buster. Nothing.

EDDIE
You've been reading that same page for the last hour...and you haven't even told me to go to bed.

JOYCE
Is it that time? Well let's-

A KNOCK on the door interrupts Joyce, startling her. The Great Dane Jasper storms into the room BARKING wildly.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Sis...let me in.

JOYCE
Where's your key?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
I lost it. I'm...I'm in a bad way.

Joyce, irritated, looks at Eddie.

JOYCE
Go to bed. I'll tuck you in soon.

EDDIE
But it's Uncle Reggie!

JOYCE
Bed. Now.

Eddie, disappointed, nods and sullenly departs.

INT. FRONT HALL, KERRINGTON HOUSEHOLD - SAME

Joyce walks up the portrait-adorned hall, past the jacket closet, to the front door. She opens it, revealing her cherubic sibling, Reginald: his upper lip is swollen, his left eye is black, his neck is bruised and his nose is broken. Blood stains his shirt.

Joyce is galvanized by the sight; tears instantly stream down her face. She pulls him inside, shuts the door and then hugs him.

JOYCE
Who did this...who did this to my baby brother?

Reginald, staring at the ground, shakes his head.

REGINALD
Some man. I don't want to talk about it.

Joyce unclasps her brother and steps back, anger in her eyes.

JOYCE
The hell you won't!
(quieter)
The hell you won't. The hell you won't. Whoever did this to you should be-

Reginald looks up from the floor and shakes his head.

REGINALD
Please sis. I just don't want to go home right now.

Joyce nods, takes her brother's hand and leads him down the hall.

INT. GUEST ROOM, KERRINGTON HOUSEHOLD - MOMENTS LATER

Reginald walks out of the bathroom, wearing a bathrobe that is too large for him. His hair is once again slicked back from his cherubic face. He looks at the wall above the bed, upon which hangs a photograph of Joyce and Kerrington in their wedding garb. He grins at the memories the photo elicits, wincing as bruised skin bunches up around his swollen eye and burst lip.

Reginald looks at his hands; they are shaking.

He walks over to the corner of the bed, upon which lies his discarded clothing; from the soiled apparel he extracts a slender bottle of whiskey. There is a KNOCK on the door; he shoves the bottle back into the sodden heap.

JOYCE
Reggie?

REGINALD
Yeah?

JOYCE
Can I come in?

REGINALD
Sure.

Joyce walks inside, carrying a steaming cup on a saucer.

REGINALD
(continuing)
Smells like peppermint tea.

Joyce nods and then rests the saucer and cup on the night stand, beside a framed picture of Jasper as a puppy and Eddie as a toddler.

REGINALD
(continuing)
Thanks.

Joyce nods again. Her eyes survey Reginald's distended and cracked features; she averts her gaze.

JOYCE
Reggie...I love you and I am concerned about you. Are you going to be okay?

REGINALD
Yeah.

JOYCE
Whenever you want to talk...about what happened...knock on my door. I don't care what time it is, whenever you want to talk, I'll listen.

REGINALD
Thank you.

A silent acknowledgement of love and shared history passes between the two.

REGINALD
(continuing)
I do have a question for you though. I see pictures of you and Bill and Eddie- and that loudmouth hound- but where's that picture of us at Sapphire Bay when we were kids?

Joyce grins.

JOYCE
I keep that one on my night stand.

Reginald opens his mouth to reply, but just nods his head instead. Joyce walks over and kisses him on the cheek.

Heavy FOOTSTEPS reverberate outside in the hall. Kerrington appears in the doorway; his eyes dull and unfocused.

REGINALD
Good evening Bill.

Kerrington dumbly nods. Joyce looks at him and knows that something is very wrong.

JOYCE
Bill...what happened?

Kerrington, distracted, looks at Joyce and then over at Reginald.

KERRINGTON
(to Reginald)
What the hell happened to you?

Joyce and Reginald exchange worried glances.

JOYCE
He's had a rough night Bill, let's leave him be for now.

Joyce walks over to Reginald's pile of dirty clothing.

Reginald's stomach sinks. Joyce grabs the soiled apparel.

JOYCE
(continuing)
I'll clean these for-

The bottle of liquor falls from the clothing to the wooden floorboards with a single loud THUNK.

Kerrington eyes the half-filled bottle, its amber contents sloshing back and forth.

KERRINGTON
Whetson got shot in the neck tonight.

The miniature tide of whiskey swishes back and forth, back and forth within the bottle. Kerrington's eyes follow the liquid's languorous motions.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
He's paralyzed...and he's probably going to die. Because people need that stuff.

Kerrington looks up from the whiskey bottle, his eyes two shining vortexes of raw hatred.

Reginald blanches and retreats a step, repelled by the intensity of Kerrington's vitriolic gaze.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Get out of my house right now you shit-eating sissy, get out or-

Enraged, Joyce spins on her husband.

JOYCE
How dare you talk to my brother that-

KERRINGTON
Don't interrupt me!

Kerrington SLAPS Joyce across the face with the back of his hand. Joyce's eyes widen in disbelief; her left cheek glows bright red.

JOYCE
You finally did it! You finally did it! I bet your old man is proud of you now.

Reginald lunges at Kerrington, but Joyce grabs his arm.

JOYCE
(continuing)
Don't, Reggie...he'll tear you apart.

Kerrington, shocked by his own actions, retreats from the room.

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. Eddie sits in his bed, crying. He covers his mouth with his pin-striped blanket to stifle the sound of his SOBS.

FADE TO BLACK

Titlecard: Boston

EXT. OSCAR'S AUTOMOTIVE REPAIRS - JUST BEFORE DAWN

A wide squat building with eight garage doors sits behind a bank of snow two feet high. Painted on a wooden sign in bright red letters is the excited phrase, 'Oscar's Automotive Repairs: We Fix-Up Cars!'

From within the building comes the sound of a car ROARING.

INT. OSCAR'S AUTOMOTIVE REPAIRS - SAME

The walls of the establishment are hung with manifold ratchets, hammers, support bars, braces, brackets and buckets filled with nuts, bolts and clips. An overturned car- its tires facing the ceiling like the paws of a playful kitten- RUMBLES with life below the lone illuminated light bulb. From out of the crushed interior of the overturned vehicle climbs a short man with a thick beard and grease-stained hands. His name is FRANKIE.

A GAUNT MAN with pale, veiny skin and sunken gray eyes watches the diminutive man from nearby.

The Gaunt Man wears a button-up maroon cashmere sweater, tight blue slacks and maroon leather shoes.

Frankie wipes his dirty digits on his pants, CLAPS and EXHALES loudly. He pulls out his tarnished silver pocket watch and shakes his head. He looks up, into the Gaunt Man's sunken eyes.

FRANKIE
We gotta skedaddle if we want to stay ahead of Mayor Firebrand. And let's not forget our appearance at Stumpy's renowned shindy this Friday.

The Gaunt Man nods.

FRANKIE
(continuing)
We should do her now?

The Gaunt Man nods. Frankie puts two fingers into his mouth and WHISTLES. A door SLAMS somewhere in the darkness of the wide, mostly unlit garage. A woman MOANS.

Two broken-nosed THUGS, both well over six feet tall and built like gorillas, walk into the pool of light illuminating the overturned car, Frankie and the clasped together hands of the Gaunt Man. The bestial duo carry a discomfited high-bred fifty-year old BLOND WOMAN; her neck and fingers are covered with jewels, her face is smeared with make-up and her ears are hung with large earrings. She wears a white fur coat and beneath it, a sullied slip. One Thug holds her by her neck, the other holds her by her left ankle. She looks over at the Gaunt Man, her face purple and distended, her eyes wet and terror-stricken.

BLOND WOMAN
Don't...my husband is sorry...he'll pay you what-

The Gaunt Man raises his index finger to his pursed lips. He then shakes his head.

The Gaunt Man looks at Frankie and nods. The tiny man walks to the overturned car, kneels down and crawls inside the crushed carriage.

The engine ROARS. The front tires spin.

The Gaunt Man looks at the Thug holding the Blond Woman's neck. The Thug attentively looks at the Gaunt Man, awaiting instructions.

The Gaunt Man points to the Blond Woman's face and then drags his long, slender fingertips across his own features.

The Blond Woman SHRIEKS and flops wildly, like a live fish in a hot skillet; the Thugs tighten their grips, squeezing her neck and left ankle. They carry her toward the overturned car.

The engine ROARS, the tires spin; the Gaunt Man waves his hand in front of his nose and clears his throat once. His cough sounds like the light, easy cough of a female child.

The foremost Thug lifts the Blond Woman's face to the car's spinning tire. Her dangling earring catches upon the rubber and is ripped from her ear, the lobe bursting open like a ripe red raspberry. She SCREAMS.

The Thug presses her face to the spinning tire...a swatch of red appears where her features once were...her nose and teeth are rubbed into oblivion.

The Gaunt Man coughs once again...the sound light and easy.

Titlecard: In or Abutting Miami Beach

EXT. THE BEACH - DAWN

Harold and Eddie walk along the beach; the horizon is a uniform gray slate-- there is no delineation between the ocean and the sky. Eddie, for the first time during his morning beach excursions, is unhappy.

HAROLD
Why are you so sour? Did you get into trouble or something? Did your pa give you a whopping?

EDDIE
My father doesn't believe in hitting.

Harold and Eddie come upon another life-sized sculpture of a nude woman, wrought out of sand. The figure lies on her side, one arm curled beneath her head. She is enormously pregnant. Her mouth is wide open and from it extends an overlong tongue which terminates in five distinct points.

HAROLD
This one's going to have a baby.

Eddie stares at the sculpture, unsettled.

Harold walks around the body, alternately squinting and shading his eyes as if he might glean some hidden detail.

He picks up a rock and then circles around to stand before the woman's pregnant stomach.

EDDIE
Don't.

Harold throws the rock into the woman's belly.

Harold and Eddie stare at the dark hole poked into her stomach.

EDDIE
(continuing)
That was dumb.

The woman's stomach caves in...and then shifts.

HAROLD
Something is in th-

The sand in her caved-in belly shifts a second time.

Harold and Eddie step away from the sculpture. Dozens of HORSESHOE CRABS burst from her stomach, gliding forward on a tattoo of insectile legs, their pointed tails raised and ready.

The boys SHRIEK and run away, terrified.

INT. THE LION, HOTEL LOBBY - JUST AFTER DAWN

The raven-haired Receptionist sits at the counter, falling asleep; Turnip-Toe is fully asleep, leaning against a newspaper spinner in the corner of the lobby. Kerrington walks into the hotel, carrying a small suitcase in his right hand. His bleary eyes and dishevelled appearance are evidence that he has not slept in a long time.

Kerrington walks towards the front desk, where the Receptionist has just lost the long war against fatigue.

KERRINGTON
Pardon me ma'am.

The Receptionist and Turnip-Toe spring to life and are instantly alert (they are quite used to catching sleep whenever they can).

RECEPTIONIST
Good morning sir and welcome to The Lion, where you'll have a roaring good time, we promise!

KERRINGTON
I'd like a room. An inexpensive one, preferably.

RECEPTIONIST
And how long do you intend to stay at The Lion?

Kerrington stares mutely at the Receptionist: he has no idea.

KERRINGTON
I'm not certain. Hopefully not too long.

INT. ROOM 314 - MOMENTS LATER

The room's walls, floor and furnishings are adjacent gold and yellow hues, with occasional brown trim thrown in for delineation. The door to the room opens; in walks Turnip-Toe, carrying Kerrington's suitcase, followed by the Police Chief himself.

TURNIP-TOE
Where should I put this, sir?

KERRINGTON
Anywhere is fine.

Turnip-Toe rests the suitcase by the night stand.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
I haven't stayed in many hotels. How much do people usually tip you?

TURNIP-TOE
A couple pennies, sometimes a nickel.

Kerrington fishes into his front pocket and from it withdraws two nickels. He hands them to Turnip-Toe.

TURNIP-TOE
(continuing)
Thank you sir.

KERRINGTON
What's your name?

TURNIP-TOE
Rudolph, but most folks call me Turnip-Toe-- cause of my gouty toe...even though it ain't swollen no more.

Kerrington nods and YAWNS.

KERRINGTON
Well...Turnip-Toe...can you make sure I'm awake by four o'clock?

Turnip-Toe nods.

TURNIP-TOE
Yes sir, I can.

Kerrington indelicately plops onto the bed; he starts unlacing his shoes.

INT. THE LION, HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Ignacio the Frog stands next to the raven-haired Receptionist, staring with his wide, bulbous eyes at the opened guest book.

IGNACIO THE FROG
(worried)
Did he say anything?

RECEPTIONIST
He said he wanted a room-- he looked real tired.

IGNACIO THE FROG
This displeases me. The Chief of Police is staying in my hotel: this puts knots in my liver.

Ignacio rubs his ribcage...uninformed as to the true location of his liver.

IGNACIO THE FROG
(continuing)
Perhaps he and his wife are having some difficulties, yes? Why else would he check into a hotel in his home town- for an indefinite duration- if not for some...marital problem?

The Receptionist SHRUGS, disinterested.

IGNACIO THE FROG
(continuing)
If that is so, I know something...someone...who might make Police Chief William Kerrington an amigo of The Frog's.

INT. THE LION, THIRD FLOOR TELEPHONE STALL - FOUR TEN

Kerrington, tucking in his dishevelled shirt, walks into the wood-framed stall at the end of the long hallway, shutting the segmented door behind him. He drops a coin into the vertical slot, lifts the ear piece to the side of his head, pokes his index finger into the dial and spins the disk. WHISSSSK.

He looks through the window opposite the telephone stall: outside, two stories down, The Lion's dual j-shaped swimming pools are visible. Upon hearing a voice in the receiver, Kerrington leans toward the protruding, conical mouthpiece.

KERRINGTON
And to you too ma'am.
(he listens)
Yes you may. Please put me through to the Miami Beach Police Precinct.
(he listens)
I will.

Through the window, Kerrington watches MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN recline and saunter in the languid hours of the day, beneath the diagonally raking beams of the falling sun.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Ralph, it's Kerrington. Any news on Whetson?

Kerrington's breath catches. He listens, his eyes distant...glazed...

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Damn. Damn.
(shakes his head)
How's his wife taking it?

Kerrington shakes his head; he rubs his eyes with his free hand.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
When's the funeral?
(he listens)
Of course I intend to...and I expect to see everyone there.

Kerrington listens for a moment, pressing his lips together in irritation; his eyes narrow.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
No. We proceed with the raids as scheduled. Tonight we-

Kerrington listens, his ire rising.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Well they had better get used to sleeping during the day for the next few weeks.
(he listens)
This is not up for debate. I'll be there by seven, and so will each flatfoot who wants to keep his job.

Kerrington SLAMS the receiver down.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Goddammit. God damn it.

He flings the door to the booth wide, the segmented panels SLAMMING loudly.

EXT. THE LION, DUAL SWIMMING POOL AREA - SAME

A child SPLASHES into the pool, joyfully SHRIEKING.

INT. THE LION, THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

Kerrington pads up the carpeted hall, his eyes glassy and his fists clenched. He passes door after door, his strides mechanical.

Loraline, dressed in a tightly-tailored pink dress with white trim and accent lines and a white hat, stands in the hallway looking at him. He walks towards her; she smiles. He steps to the side to circumnavigate her.

LORALINE
Pardon me sir, but aren't you the Chief of Police?

Kerrington, only a foot away from her, stops abruptly and looks her in the eye.

KERRINGTON
I'm married and you're a whore.

Loraline blanches, but then quickly smiles and shakes her head.

LORALINE
I'm not, you've mistaken-

KERRINGTON
Shut up-- I'm in no mood for smalltalk and lies. You're a whore. If you weren't, you would have slapped me when I called you one or at least walked away...not engaged in further conversation. Who sent you, The Frog?

Loraline opens her mouth, but cannot think of anything to say.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
I thought he was crooked, but I didn't think he was foolish. The fact that you're here shows that he's really got something to hide.

Loraline continues to search for something to say...unsuccessfully.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Just go away and tell him you never met me. I will forget that this conversation took place the moment I'm done looking at you.

Kerrington walks past Loraline, reaches his door, opens it and enters. He SLAMS the door shut behind him.

Loraline flinches as the lock on his door CLICKS and then SNAPS shut. Her eyes are wide in astonishment.

LORALINE
My goodness.

EXT. OPEN FIELD ABUTTING A SUGAR CANE FARM - TWILIGHT

Stumpy Stubbs, his nineteen year old admirer Madeline- wearing an orange sundress- and his belligerent Scottish Terrier Irish stand in a wide open field, at the perimeter of a sugar cane farm. Accompanying them is an African American man of at least seventy years named YARDLEY. He has white hair and a wiry beard sans mustache.

Madeline awkwardly holds a shotgun in her hands; Yardley grips the handle of an angled, wooden stick, the opposite end of which terminates in a half-circle. Stumpy, bemused, watches Madeline struggle with the firearm.

MADELINE
This thing is heavy.

Madeline raises the gun, the tip wavering wildly in all directions.

Stumpy Stubbs and Yardley exchange concerned glances; Irish ducks his head and slowly backs away.

STUMPY STUBBS
Let me help you with that, Miss Jackson.

Stumpy presses his chest into her back (he is two inches shorter than she), places his left hand atop her left hand (supporting the barrel of the shotgun) and then places his right hand atop her right hand upon the pistol grip. He kisses her upon the neck. SMECK. She flinches and then GIGGLES.

MADELINE
Stop that and show me how to do it. Show me how to shoot skeets.

STUMPY STUBBS
Yardley...

Yardley leans over to the small wooden crate filled with clay pigeons, extracts one and fits it into the curvilinear end of the orange bracket.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
Now the most important thing is-

MADELINE
I know, I know-- point a little ahead of the skeet to allow time for the pellets to get there.

Stumpy and Yardley, impressed, exchange glances with each other and nod.

STUMPY STUBBS
Lights!

Yardley sets his feet. Stumpy and Madeline raise the shotgun.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
Camera!

Yardley brings his arm back.

MADELINE

Action!

Yardley whips his arm forward, catapulting the clay pigeon into the pink and amber sky. The skeet's shadow glides across the tubular green and yellow sugar cane stalks, a black phantom gradually growing smaller...and smaller...and smaller as the clay disk rises.

Madeline, squinting her left eye, follows the skeet with the barrel of the gun.

STUMPY STUBBS

Duck!

Stumpy abruptly swivels Madeline and the gun away from the skeet. BOOM.

A tiny black speck- almost invisible to the naked eye- drops from the sky. Madeline's eyes are wide, reflecting surprise, excitement and a little horror.

MADELINE

You made me shoot a duck!

The dead fowl's final remark reaches the ears of the quartet a moment later, a dismal Q-QUACK with wet punctuation. The speck falls from the sky into the center of the dense, waist-high sugar cane farm. Madeline lowers the barrel of the gun, the smoke rising from it as if from a thick cigar.

Stumpy releases Madeline and looks down at Irish. Irish looks up at Stumpy, aloofly.

STUMPY STUBBS

Fetch, boy. Fetch!

Irish looks to his right, across his bearded snout towards the vicinity in which the duck fell. He SNORTS and looks back up at Stumpy Stubbs.

MADELINE

He doesn't fetch?

STUMPY STUBBS

When he feels up to it, he does.
He's very...independently-minded.

Madeline looks over at Yardley; the African American man is currently fitting another clay pigeon into the bracket.

MADELINE

Yardley, why don't you fetch it
for us?

Stumpy and Yardley pause for a brief moment. Yardley looks down, away from Madeline's bright, smiling eyes. He patiently flicks away a few flecks from the surface of the new skeet...aberrations that might affect the trajectory of its flight.

STUMPY STUBBS
Yardley is a man...and my closest friend. He doesn't 'fetch.'

Madeline, seeing she has upset Stumpy, grows a bit nervous.

MADELINE
I'm dreadfully sorry if I've offended you Mr. Stubbs, I was only-

STUMPY STUBBS
Your redresses and contrite words should be directed towards Yardley-- he's the one you insulted.

Madeline turns to Yardley.

MADELINE
I'm sorry...really I am...I'm just not used to being in the presence of colored folk.

YARDLEY
Think nothing of it ma'am: I know you meant no offense.

He smiles and Madeline reciprocates...genuinely relieved. She turns back to Stumpy.

MADELINE
You've known each other for a long time?

STUMPY STUBBS
I've known Yardley, 'The White Harpoon' for more than twenty-five years.

MADELINE
'The White Harpoon'?

STUMPY STUBBS
They don't call him that because he's white, if you follow. If it wasn't for him, I'd still be a street performer.

YARDLEY
You exaggerate, Stumpo.

STUMPY STUBBS
(to Yardley)
Often- and I lie regularly- but not regarding this. We have history and that can never be denied.
(to Madeline)
Yardley saw my blackface routine in Mississippi, came up to me afterwards and told me exactly what was wrong with it...and he was right.

MADELINE
What was wrong with it?

YARDLEY
Heaps. Back then, Stumpo was a cautious dancer and a timid singer: it was clear that he was doing an impersonation of a negro without much understanding of real colored folk. It takes heaps more than face-paint to make that kind of routine work, especially when playing to an actual negro crowd...which he did often.

Yardley scratches his white beard.

YARDLEY
(continuing)
When he sang 'Mammy, Strong as Coffee', it seemed as if he was singing about some angelic mother figure...and that ain't what that song's about-- not at all.

Irish trots up to Yardley; the septuagenarian leans over and scratches the dog gently upon the snout. The dog BARKS quietly, in a friendly way.

MADELINE
What's that song really about?

YARDLEY
How this country...this era...corrupts all that is right and natural and innocent, and how you neglect the ones who love you the most. And it's about how life just keeps getting worse and worse as you get older.

MADELINE
That's...that's very...sad.

YARDLEY
'Sad' is what Stumpo needed to feel to sing that- and most negro songs- properly.

Yardley looks down into Irish's eyes and then points off east, toward the sugar cane farm.

YARDLEY
(continuing; soothing tone)
Bring back that duck and we'll divvy up the gizzards.

Irish beelines in the direction of the fallen duck. Stumpy watches the careening canine, shaking his head in irritation.

INT. MIAMI BEACH POLICE PRECINCT, KERRINGTON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Kerrington sits behind his massive desk, staring at the telephone; the table fan ROARS nearby, tinsel streamers SNAPPING in the current. He SIGHS, picks up the receiver and rests it against his ear. He spins the dial and then listens, waiting for a connection.

KERRINGTON
And to you ma'am.
(he listens)
Yes you may, I'd like to be put through to the Kerrington residence at four-nine-three east Seacrest Avenue.

Kerrington swallows dryly. He waits, drumming his fingers on the table.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Hello Joyce.

He listens, fingering the scored wooden handle of his pistol.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Yes I'm still alive.
(he listens, frowning)
I not sure about that, but yes, I probably still am a hateful bastard.
(he listens for a moment)
Well I'm going on another raid tonight and...well...I just...well I wanted to let you know that. I'll be staying at The Lion for now. I'm in room three fourteen if you need to reach me.

He looks at a framed portrait photo of Eddie, Joyce and himself sitting in a very orderly manner beneath an oak tree, all three of them dappled by sunlight.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Listen Joyce, I'm sorry that I hit you...I just lost control when I saw that bottle in our house...the very night that Whetson-

His wife cuts him off; he listens, trying to get another word in.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
I'm not making excuses, I'm just saying why it happened.
(he listens)
There is a difference.
(he listens, shaking his head)
Wait, Joyce wait. Can you put Eddie on for a couple of heartbeats? Please?

Kerrington waits for a moment; his face brightens.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Hey buster, how are you?

He listens, cheered by the sound of his son's voice.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Well I did something very bad yesterday and I need to stay away for a spell.
(he listens)
I hit your mother.

Kerrington's eye shine with tears; he shuts them, tightly.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
No. No, she didn't deserve it and I'm ashamed of what I did. Now listen, while I'm away you mind what she says and don't cause trouble. No guff. I'm serious.
(he listens for a moment, nodding)
Well don't let the food get cold--that's impolite.
(he listens)
Don't call her a nag either, that steams her. Go have dinner.
(he listens)
I love you too.

Kerrington hangs up the phone, picks up his gun and walks to the door. He puts his strong hand upon the varnished knob.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY SPEAKEASY - LATER

Piles of torn, sundered and moth-eaten books line one wall of the clandestine drinking club. Upholstered chairs, divans, love seats and several sofas, all peopled with DRINKERS, fill the cramped space. A wide bar with a MATRONLY WOMAN behind it attracts and ensnares inhabitants like flypaper.

The door BURSTS open. Kerrington, Stanley and NINE OFFICERS file into the room, guns drawn and raised.

KERRINGTON
This is a raid. Drinks down, hands up.

The Drinkers GRUMBLE, GROAN and SIGH collectively. Stanley, a gun in either hand, walks around the establishment, attempting to look tough through his thick glasses.

Kerrington walks over to the Matronly Bartender.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Pour that hooch out on the ground.
All of it.

The Matronly Woman nods, uncorks the nearest bottles and tips them on their sides. GLUG, GLUG, GLUG...

Stanley swaggers over to two avuncular old men. They look at him with meek, apologetic eyes.

STANLEY
You guys like bars, huh? Well tonight you'll get to see plenty of bars...of a long and vertical nature.

Kerrington looks at Stanley and shakes his head.

KERRINGTON
Don't get cute.

INT. THE LION, ROOM 718 - NIGHT

The room is wallpapered with a faux-woven gold and yellow pattern; the rug is brown and the open balcony admits a view of the beach outside. The moon has won free of the clouds.

Skinny, the jocular de facto leader of the hooded, white race enthusiasts staying at The Lion, lies in bed, naked above the sheets. His face, neck, hands and shins are red; the rest of his body is pale. He contentedly scratches his white beard with his yellowing fingernails. Loraline, completely nude, sits on the edge of the bed, looking towards the balcony.

SKINNY
You sure are beautiful.

Skinny leans forward, puts his hand on her arm, squeezes and then pulls her- slowly but firmly- onto her back, beside him. He leans over her.

SKINNY
(continuing)
I bet you've had thousands of men...all different kinds.

Loraline stares at him blankly, choosing not to respond.

SKINNY
(continuing)
You ever fuck a kike? They got small, hacked-off cocks like they say?

LORALINE
I don't like that kind of talk.

SKINNY
Play along, sugar-- I'm just having fun. You ever put a coon's dick in your mouth? Taste like chocolate or racoon shit?

Loraline ignores the remark. Skinny plucks at her left nipple with his thumb and index finger.

LORALINE
Do you talk to your wife like this when you're in bed? About other men's cocks?

SKINNY
You got a lot of arrogance for a whore, don't you?

Skinny pinches her left nipple between his fingers...hard. She shoves him off and climbs out of bed, rubbing her breast.

SKINNY
(continuing)
Now wait there Loraline...I was just playing!

Loraline walks over to a chair, upon which sit her brassiere, underpants and dress.

SKINNY
(continuing)
I paid good money-

LORALINE
To fuck me. And you did...badly.

Loraline steps into her underwear, drawing it up her strong legs. She picks up and pulls her opened brassiere over her breasts and then threads the white buttons through the eyelets along its side, closing it. She steps into her black and silver dress.

SKINNY
I'm gonna complain to The Frog about this.

Loraline expertly fastens her dress behind her back with one hand; she looks around the room.

LORALINE
Where are my shoes?

SKINNY
(sulking)
I don't know...but I can tell you where to cram 'em once you've got 'em. It rhymes with China.

Loraline walks around the room, looking for her shoes. She looks past the partially opened closet door. A white robe hangs inside, a triangular white hood draped across its left shoulder.

LORALINE
Well how about that...a pure-blooded white supremacist...paying to fuck a Jewish whore.

Skinny's eyes go wide in horror. Loraline sees her shoes, half-hidden under the night stand; she picks them up, laces dangling.

SKINNY
B-but you are...your nose is so small...and you don't...you can't... You've got blond hair!

LORALINE
So do lots of people from Poland.

Titlecard: Southeast Boston

INT. TAXI-CAB CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Seated in the spacious back of a horse-drawn carriage is CLARENCE, a thirty-five year old man with a black caterpillar of a mustache and comparably thick eyebrows, and his wife ELENA, a stringent woman five years his senior with hair pulled so tautly back from her austere face that it resembles a shellacked helmet. Facing them on the opposing bench are their three teenage CHILDREN, two girls and a boy.

It is snowing outside, the flakes swirling with unknowable intentions across the night sky.

CLARENCE
Driver.

DRIVER (O.S.)
(Boston accent)
Yeah, Mr. O'Doershell.

CLARENCE
Swing us around Scrod Way.

DRIVER (O.S.)
Yessir.

Elena looks at her Children.

ELENA
Are you looking forward to warm and sunny Miami Beach?

The Children nod, but say nothing. The CLOPPING of horses' hooves grows louder. One of the steeds WHINNIES.

The interior of the carriage is instantly aglow with bright red and orange light. Clarence, Elena and their three Children look out of the side window, through which they see a tall building completely covered with ROARING, CRACKLING flames.

A SCREAMING MAN jumps out of the building, his clothing aflame. He slams into the pavement with a CRACKING THUD. Dark fluid pools beneath him, reflecting the licking tongues of the conflagration; he does not move.

CLARENCE
Elena- to answer your earlier question- I'd say yes: I do think that Beantown will remember us.

Titlecard: In or Abutting Miami Beach

EXT. HIALEAH CEMETERY - MORNING

The day is hot; the sun screams mercilessly upon the bleached tombstones, statuettes, and plaques throughout the graveyard. A crowd of EIGHTY MOURNERS surrounds a coffin suspended over an open grave by two tied-off ropes slung over winches. Within the crowd are forty uniformed OFFICERS, including Kerrington, former Police Chief Lippino and Stanley. Standing in front of the assemblage, halfway between the crowd and the coffin is WHETSON'S WIDOW, wearing a black veil. Her eyes stare at the coffin in front of her from a small sad world far, far away. She tosses a handful of soil upon the shellacked wooden coffin; the dirt slides off of the slick surface, not one grain sticking.

The suspension ropes are untied by four Officers; they begin to lower the coffin. The box sinks into the ground. Whetson's Widow watches as her husband falls away from her, her face brave and strong...composed. A moment later, she breaks and begins to CRY.

Kerrington watches the coffin disappear into the ground. He silently mouths the word 'goodbye.'

The assemblage dissembles. Three Officers make eye contact with Kerrington; their eyes are red from crying and narrow at him in a hostile manner. They walk off, without saying a word.

Kerrington, Lippino (limping and leaning on a cane) and Stanley walk away from the gathering.

LIPPINO
(to Kerrington)
The men hate you. All of them...except maybe Stanley here who's too damn gun-happy to know any better.

STANLEY
What's not to like about guns?

Kerrington frowns at Stanley.

LIPPINO
Tonight's Stumpy's big shindy. You going to look the other way...or are you going to do something that redefines the word stupid?

KERRINGTON
I'm not looking to wage a war I know I'll lose. If Stumpy Stubbs keeps the revelry behind doors- and Miamians are unmolested- I'll turn a blind eye to his depravity, much as it sickens me to do so.

LIPPINO
I'm glad to hear you say that- I wasn't so sure after our last talk.

Lippino grins; Kerrington does not.

LIPPINO
(continuing)
You need some officers alive if you want to continue with those very, very important speakeasy raids, right?

Lippino pats Kerrington on the shoulder. Kerrington steps close to his old boss, his eyes cold and hard.

KERRINGTON
Don't patronize me. I don't intend to storm Stumpy's shindy, but I am going to observe which locals attend...and if a certain retired Police Chief walks out of that building, I will toss him into the hoosegow so hard he'll crack the concrete wall with his fucking head.

Lippino's face reddens.

Kerrington turns and walks away.

EXT. HIALEAH CEMETERY - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Kerrington stands in front of a tombstone, upon which is written: 'Margaret Alice Kerrington, survived by her beloved Son and Husband'. He silently mouths the word 'mom', leans over and then presses his lips to the eroded white slab.

Kerrington stands up and walks over to the next grave. He kneels before a denuded flat stone in the ground that reads, 'Louis Kerrington, buried by his son.' Kerrington's mouth becomes a thin line beneath his rusty mustache. He presses his tightly clenched left fist upon the concrete marker. He twists his hand, back and forth, grinding his knuckles against the stone. He grits his teeth.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. SEABED, THIRTY FEET BELOW THE SURFACE - NOON

The turquoise water glows with curtains of crystallized sunlight; multicolored motes swirl in languid revolutions about the seabed. A brown stone crab ambles upon a rock, its manifold legs dully clicking against the coral beneath it. The crustacean's left claw is covered with a pea-green whorl.

CUT TO:

EXT. BISCANE BAY DOCK - LATER

A wooden crate SLAMS upon the dock, rattling the crustaceans trapped inside, disturbing their somnolent reveries. A SUN-BRONZED FISHERMAN with a white beard, slits for eyes, and seven fingers, pulls the pegs off of the top of the crate. He kicks the door open; the wooden flap CREAKS wide on its rusty hinges, revealing twenty crabs with moribund dispositions.

The crab with the green whorl upon its left claw CLICKS its pincers, in futile communication to an empty sky.

The Sun-Bronzed Fisherman reaches in, grabs the brown stone crab with the green whorl upon its left claw and sets it upon a rusty metal table. He summarily brings a pair of scissors to the second knuckle beneath its oversized claw (the one with the green whorl upon it). CLICK. The crustacean's eye-stalks swivel to its amputated appendage, lying upon the table.

The Sun-Bronzed Man hurls the crab back into the sea. SPLASH. He tosses the meaty claw with the green whorl upon it into a bucket of ice.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN, THE WHITE PALM - LATE DAY

The kitchen is a very wide space, with twenty burners, two flat tops and four oversized kettles lining the north wall. From variegated hooks hang seventy saute pans, thirty pots, and numerous burlap bags of onions, potatoes, beets, turnips and celery.

Ten CHEFS busy themselves mincing, peeling, picking and sorting. An old HAITIAN WOMAN, her head wrapped in a white towel, sets the steaming, stone crab claw with the green whorl upon a wooden block and raises a small wooden mallet over it. She aims the hammer, squints and sticks out the very tip of her tongue. With a sharp- and often practiced-gesture, she brings the mallet down upon the claw. CRACK!

The tip of her tongue retracts.

CUT TO:

INT. BAKERY, THE WHITE PALM - MOMENTS LATER

Barrels of flour, sugar, vanilla beans and dried yeast are piled against one wall of the bakery like a war bivouac; four convection ovens line the opposite side. With a rubber spatula in each hand, the PASTRY CHEF- a skinny nervous man well into his sixties- spreads pink icing upon an enormous, fourteen-layered cake. Two other PASTRY CHEFS work a tremendous tangle of dough on a table in the rear, regularly coaxing it with flour and water.

An eighty-five year old CHANDLER with an enormous nose and ears like bat wings sets a brown bag beside the Pastry Chef.

PASTRY CHEF
I don't see you nearly as much as I used to.

CHANDLER
(shaking his head)
Ever since they invented those darn light bulbs, I've been selling far more soap than candles.

The Chandler reaches inside the bag and withdraws three wax candles sculpted and colored to resemble Floridian trees: a palm, a golden shower and a mango. The Pastry Chef nods his approbation.

PASTRY CHEF
Beautiful work. Let me see the others.

The Chandler carefully sets the tree trio down and withdraws another figural candle, this one wrapped in tissue paper. He plucks the protective wrapping away to reveal a waxen image of Stumpy Stubbs, wearing a tuxedo, top hat and white gloves, his face painted in traditional white-lipped blackface. The Pastry Chef smiles, as does the Chandler.

PASTRY CHEF
(continuing)
Where's the wick on that one?

The Chandler points to the cigar jutting out of Stumpy's mouth.

PASTRY CHEF
(continuing)
Inside the cigar? That's pretty clever.

CHANDLER
Thanks. Remember when they used to call him Stumpo?

PASTRY CHEF
You bet I do. Nobody did ragtime like Stumpo.

The Pastry Chef sets down the Stumpo candle, reaches into the bag with both hands and withdraws two more candles. They are of voluptuous nude women, standing, their torsos arched slightly back, long red wicks extruding from the centers of their breasts.

The Chandler shakes his head and SIGHS.

PASTRY CHEF
(continuing)
Times ain't what they were.

CHANDLER
They ain't.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - TWILIGHT

The dressing room has ten makeup stations, each with a bulb framed mirror, a table and two chairs. All of the facilities are occupied by variegated PERFORMERS. VIVIAN, a sexpot burlesque performer with bright red hair and a permanent pout, watches herself in the mirror as she applies feline eyebrows to her forehead. She sets the eyebrow pencil down and adjusts her ample bosom within her blue, sequin-covered strapless dress...summarily checking her cleavage in the mirror.

Two lithe female DANCERS look at her distastefully from the adjacent makeup station.

VIVIAN
It's not easy carrying these things around all day. Not that you'd know.

EXT. THE WHITE PALM NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The light blue building is five stories tall, dotted with triangular and circular windows, and surmounted by an enormous palm tree made of stone and painted white. FINELY-DRESSED PEOPLE file into the club, mostly in pairs or trios.

Across the wide street sits Kerrington's enormous green car and within it, the Police Chief himself. He has a wooden clipboard supporting a yellow notepad in his lap and holds a pen in his right hand. Next to him sits Stanley, watching the front door of The White Palm through binoculars.

STANLEY
Our Mayor just walked in.

Kerrington writes 'Mayor Julius Johnstone' on the pad in his lap, below a list of thirty-seven other names.

STANLEY
(continuing)
Some more gangsters from Boston just walked in.

Kerrington shakes his head.

INT. FRONT HALL, THE WHITE PALM - SAME

The HOSTESS, a stunning Asian Woman in a scarlet dress adorned by an emerald green many-whiskered dragon, stands at the podium, smiling at the guests as they approach.

She has a list of names written in a leather book before her and two tall BOUNCERS immediately behind her.

Daniel, the slender, silver-haired mob boss with mismatched eyes and a fondness for staplers, and Murchenko, the small-headed thug with grossly swollen knuckles, walk toward the hostess. They are both in good spirits and have gotten a little sun since their time in the warehouse where they gave a young man a Beantown Mouthwash. They both wear opaline tuxedos.

HOSTESS
Good evening gentlemen and welcome to The White Palm. What are your names?

DANIEL
Daniel and Murchenko.

The Hostess grins and looks at the list; she turns to the BOUNCER.

HOSTESS
Escort these men to the top tier: they are VIPs.

DANIEL
You bet we are.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT HALL, THE WHITE PALM - MOMENTS LATER

The Hostess grins at the approaching guests.

The tacit, gray-eyed, veiny, pale-skinned Gaunt Man and his diminutive partner, the bearded and talkative Frankie, approach. The Gaunt Man wears a maroon-colored linen shirt draped over gray slacks; Frankie wears a traditional tuxedo. Both mobsters look tired, as if they have not rested much since erasing the face of a rival's wife with a spinning car tire. Beside Frankie strides Loraline, wearing a dark violet dress and a matching, diagonal-brim chapeau.

FRANKIE
(to the Gaunt Man)
This party gets bigger every year.

The Hostess turns to the Bouncers behind her.

HOSTESS
Escort this party to the top tier: they are VIPs.

FRANKIE
(to the Hostess)
Aren't you just the prettiest little China doll? I bet you know all the beauty secrets of the Orient, don't you?

The Gaunt Man COUGHS, weak and effeminate. Loraline looks at the Gaunt Man and grins, covering over the unease his tacit, inhuman presence causes her.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT HALL, THE WHITE PALM - MOMENTS LATER

The Hostess smiles at the approaching couple.

Elena has her arm hooked through Clarence's as they leisurely stride up the hall. Clarence's thick mustache and thick eyebrows stand out prominently upon his slightly sun-reddened face; he wears a long-tailed tuxedo. Elena's hair is pulled back dramatically over a faux scallop shell peppered with sapphires which match her immaculate gown. The couple looks as serene as they did the night they watched the building burn in Boston.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT HALL, THE WHITE PALM - MOMENTS LATER

The Hostess smiles at the approaching couple...though her eyes flicker over them in a slightly concerned manner.

Ignacio the Frog and the raven-haired Receptionist walk towards the Hostess. The Frog wears a pea-green linen suit; the Receptionist, thoroughly made up (to her detriment), wears a garish red and black gown, which sprouts quills and fins and other unneeded- and almost demonic- appendages.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT HALL, THE WHITE PALM - MOMENTS LATER

The Hostess' smile fades when she descries the approaching guest.

Charles walks somnolently up the hall. The abandoned groom is still wearing his dishevelled wedding tuxedo; he has yet to curtail his burgeoning beard.

HOSTESS
Good evening and welcome to The White Palm.

Charles nods.

CHARLES
Hello.

HOSTESS
You are that gentleman from Philly...the one...

Charles wanly nods.

HOSTESS
(continuing)
I read that love letter you wrote and had printed in the Miami Gazette. It must have cost a bundle to get it printed like that...across four full pages.

CHARLES
I have plenty of money.

HOSTESS
It was so beautiful it...it kind of made me feel sad about my own marriage.

CHARLES
Sorry.

HOSTESS
Do you think...she saw it?

Charles shrugs. The Hostess looks down at the ledger.

HOSTESS
(continuing)
They have you in the bottom tier. Would you like for me to see if I can get you something better?

CHARLES
I'd prefer to sit someplace where- once intoxicated- I can vomit... discreetly.

The Hostess nods.

INT. THE GALA ROOM IN THE WHITE PALM - MOMENTS LATER

The vast space is hung with white, baby blue and pink streamers; a five-tiered dance floor- each floor a different curvilinear and asymmetrical shape- sits in the center of the room, surrounded by a three-tiered dining area.

Crystal rope chandeliers hang down twenty feet from the fifty-foot-high ceiling and palm leaves painted white adorn the dark blue walls. In the riser behind the topmost dance floor, a RAGTIME BAND plays a light melody punctuated by the long-haired band leader's erratic (but tasteful) attacks on his xylophone with felt-covered beaters.

A triptych of giant posters hangs on the wall behind the band. The first poster shows Stumpy Stubbs in blackface and is entitled, 'Shantytown Shenanigans'. The second shows Stumpy dressed as a Tycoon wearing a top hat and a monocle, his left hand slid beneath his vest in Napoleonic imitation; the caption reads, 'Stumpy Stubbs in The Potbellied Despot'. The third poster shows Stumpy in a more dramatic pose, kneeling before the bed of his infirm mother, offering her a giant, red and white striped lollipop; the picture is called, 'The Sweet Sacrifice'.

Upon the top tier of the restaurant, behind a two-bar railing of varnished beech wood, atop a baby blue carpet, sit thirty tables with white linen tablecloths surrounded by plush leather chairs. Amidst the elevated crowd of nearly fifty BUSINESSMEN, POLITICIANS and ENTERTAINERS at three neighboring tables sit the three Boston crimelords: Daniel (with Murchenko), the Gaunt Man (with Frankie and Loraline) and Clarence (with Elena).

Anthony, the handsome fellow who watched Loraline swim the other night, walks his swarthy, bronze-skinned, jewel-laden wife onto the top tier. Anthony pulls out a chair for his spouse and kisses her from behind on the neck...during which time his eyes flicker to Loraline.

Loraline grins.

Clarence looks at his wife.

CLARENCE
Pardon me for a moment my dear.

He stands from the table, looks over at Daniel and then walks to the varnished beech railing overlooking the dance floor.

Daniel rises from his table.

DANIEL
(to Murchenko)
I'll be back in a couple of heartbeats. Chew on some mint leaves or some parsley-- your breath stinks.

Daniel walks toward the railing and stands beside Clarence.

The Gaunt Man rises from his seat beside Loraline, coughs weakly, and walks toward Clarence and Daniel. The two men turn to him, smiling over suppressed unease.

DANIEL
(continuing)
It's a shame what's going on in Beantown...all on account of the Mayor losing one lousy son to a drunken mobster. It's not as if he doesn't have any other kids.

CLARENCE
You are- quite clearly- a family man.

At this remark, the Gaunt Man's lips curl, almost imperceptibly.

DANIEL
So what do you fellows think about Miami Beach?

CLARENCE
Until things cool down up north, I think this looks like a very good place for business.

The Gaunt Man nods. The lights dim throughout the nightclub.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GALA ROOM IN THE WHITE PALM - MOMENTS LATER

VIVIAN, the sultry red-headed burlesque performer, stands in in the center of the stage, her blue, strapless, sequin-covered dress coruscates brilliantly with refracted light, like a storm of jewels; three feather boas of slightly different blue hues dangle from her shoulders and neck, down to her imposing, arctic blue high-heeled shoes. She holds a yellow note in her hands. POOF, the paper bursts aflame; Vivian YELPS, dropping it.

The yellow missive wafts to the floor, sailing back and forth like a shot airplane, stitching lines of smoke in the air. It lands between her feet, where she summarily STOMPS upon it, putting out the flames.

VIVIAN
Damn. Now I have to bend over.

The BWONG! of a kettle drum reverberates in the room. The male portion of the audience CHEERS, CLAPS and makes suggestive remarks. A few women HISS.

Vivian slowly bends over, leaning toward the pink missive. The spotlight narrows like a white pupil; the circle of bright white luminance closes in upon her hand as it drifts towards the pink paper, her royal blue nails look like five chips of petrified sky. Bent perpendicularly, Vivian sends her fingers towards the missive-

VIVIAN
(continuing)
Hey!

The spotlight widens: the circle grows to include her face and very exposed cleavage. Still bent over, she turns her head back and looks towards her posterior. The spotlight widens to reveal a small tablecloth and dinner plate resting upon her upthrust rear end. White flecks waft down onto the steak, tomato and baked potato within the plate.

VIVIAN
(continuing)
Hey, what are you doing back there?

The spotlight opens wider to reveal Stumpy Stubbs sitting behind Vivian's rear, a napkin tucked into the collar of his short-sleeved Hawaiian shirt; he shakes salt onto his meal. The assembled crowd APPLAUDS.

STUMPY STUBBS
Mine eyes descry...rump roast.

The crowd explodes with LAUGHTER...and a few pun-haters MOAN. Vivian feigns indignation. Stumpy picks up a fork and dramatically pokes it into the steak balanced upon her upthrust rear end.

VIVIAN
(feigning pain)
Ouch!

Vivian- in an effort to work through her 'pain'- begins to tap dance...somehow keeping her rear end in the same upthrust position. TAP-TA-TAP-TAP-TAP-TAPPITY-TA-TA-TAPPITY-TAP.

Stumpy cuts a piece of steak from the jiggling plate and raises it to his mouth. TAP-TA-TAP-TAP-TAP-TAPPITY-TAPPITY-TA-TAPPITY. Stumpy vigorously chews the steak.

VIVIAN
(continuing; gasping
and tap dancing)
We have a very special
guest...flown here from D.C.
(more)

VIVIAN (cont'd)
(gasp)
Ladies and gentlemen, I can hardly believe it, but the President of the United States has decided to join our shindy!

At the center of another spotlight is Irish; he walks across the stage, his snout held high in Scottish Terrier elitism. He wears a wig of powdered, curly white hair.

STUMPY STUBBS
You idiot, that's the prime minister!

The crowd ROARS. Irish eyes them derisively.

The stage lights illuminate twelve female DANCERS; the prancing dozen wear shimmering skirts and giant paper mache heads of Stumpy: frowning with a kaiser helmet, blackface with a top hat, screaming in a baby bonnet, mustached with a furry tzar hat...

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
And here's where I whistle.

Stumpy puts his index fingers into his mouth and makes crazed bird calls...in perfectly articulated descending chromatic runs.

From the top tier, Loraline watches the spectacle with bright, young eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GALA ROOM IN THE WHITE PALM - LATER

The amber house lights have been raised (though are still dim) and the band plays a slow waltz...with odd washboard and jug accompaniment. Seventy of the GUESTS dance on the various tiers. A barrage of POPS in rapid succession heralds the arrival of champagne.

Reginald, his hair slicked back from his (somewhat healed) cherubic face, leads a team of fastidious WAITERS in long-tailed tuxedos around the top tier, each man holds a bottle with a deep blue silk napkin.

Reginald walks toward and stands before Stumpy Stubbs' table, seated at which are the silent film star, his nineteen year-old admirer Madeline, his African American mentor Yardley and six shining Friends (the group who rode with him on the train).

Stumpy and Yardley wear tuxedos; Madeline wears a beautiful cream-colored gown fringed with white feathers. Stone crab claws, baked clams, tomatoes, rolls and gratin bowls with potatoes and spinach sit before each person.

Reginald extends the bottle towards Stumpy's drinking flute.

REGINALD
Would you like some champagne, sir?

STUMPY STUBBS
(irritated)
I thought I'd support the temperance movement tonight.

Reginald withdraws the bottle.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
Are you really that thick? I was being facetious.

Reginald, stone-faced, begins to pour champagne into Stumpy Stubbs' champagne flute; the yellow-hued beverage boldly effervesces. Reginald then fills Madeline, Yardley and the sextet's flutes as well.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
This thing is killing me!

Stumpy reaches under the tables, yanks off his left loafer- including the prosthetic foot inside- and shoves it at Reginald.

Madeline GASPS; Yardley grins.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
Put this thing on ice for a minute, will ya?

Reginald nods and leaves, holding the loafer with the prosthetic foot.

MADELINE
So that's why you keep your socks on when we...we...

She blushes. Yardley TITTERS.

MADELINE
(continuing)
I thought you were hiding unsightly toenails...or foot stink or something.

STUMPY STUBBS
So the name 'Stumpy' didn't suggest anything to you?

Madeline playfully shoves Stumpy's shoulder.

INT. GENTLEMEN'S WASHROOM - SAME

The floor of the room is an alternation of crescent and star shaped tiles- both opaline- set upon a checkered dark and baby blue pattern. Three curvilinear faucets with wide bowls and round mirrors stand opposite the five stalls, each of which is of white-lacquered beechwood, inlaid with silver filigree in the shape of palm trees. An aged African American ATTENDANT in a white tuxedo sits upon a wooden stool beside the faucets; the table beside him has neat rows of towels, handkerchiefs, hair grease jars and disposable combs.

The sound of a man RETCHING fills the bathroom. The Attendant waves his hand in front of his nose, dismissing the mephitic odor which assails him.

The stall door opens and out staggers Charles; his face is a greenish pallor and covered with a mask of sour sweat. A few moist flecks of evidence glisten upon his tuxedo lapel.

Charles looks at the mirror; for a brief moment, he does not recognize himself.

ATTENDANT
Would you care for a warm, moist towel?

CHARLES
Why not?

The Attendant twists a mother-of-pearl inlaid handle atop the faucet to his left; hot water sprays with a demonic HISS into the curved bowl beneath the spout. The Attendant plucks a white washcloth with his dark, weathered fingers and holds it beneath the HISSING emergence. Steam rises, fogging the mirror and with it, the clarity of Charles' reflection.

The door to the washroom opens. A small BALD MAN wearing a tuxedo and thick glasses enters. He looks at Charles; Charles looks at him.

CHARLES
(continuing)
How can I be of service?

The Bald Man says nothing, yet continues to eye Charles.

CHARLES
(continuing)
Perhaps you wish to borrow my hair?

The Bald Man neither smiles nor takes offense. Charles looks away from him, back to the Attendant, who is currently wringing the hot water from the washcloth with slow strangling motions. The Bald Man continues to stare at Charles.

The Attendant proffers the cloth to the abandoned groom; the wet rag hangs limp and steaming like the rent carcass of a dead animal in winter. Charles takes the cloth and brings it to his face.

CHARLES
(continuing)
Thank you.

Between his cloth-covered fingers, Charles peers at the Bald Man.

CHARLES
(continuing)
Is this when you announce that you are my long-lost bald father?

The Bald Man's face is suffused with wan melancholy.

BALD MAN
I am the doctor who diagnosed your wife.

Charles stops rubbing his face with the washcloth; he holds it firmly to his forehead, steam rising...a vaporish inquiry.

CHARLES
What are you talking about?

BALD MAN
Two days prior to your wedding, your wife came to me in secret. She had developed a mottled rash on the nape of her neck, beneath her chin and behind her ears.

Charles lowers the washcloth; his agape mouth a pasty, desiccated aperture.

BALD MAN
(continuing)
She has advanced degenerative scleroderma.

With a tremulous hand, Charles reaches inside his jacket and withdraws a whiskey flask. He twists off the top and drops it to the ground where it CLINKS and rolls away, free forever.

Charles drinks from the whiskey flask until he is gulping empty air.

INT. THE GALA ROOM IN THE WHITE PALM - MOMENTS LATER

Seven tables over from Stumpy and his retinue, Loraline lifts her recently filled champagne flute to her lips; she grins meekly at the only other person at the table: the Gaunt Man. The pale, veiny man stares at the myriad lights and crystals within the chandelier.

Frankie escorts Anthony, Ignacio the Frog and UMBERTO, a fifty year old Spaniard, to the table. Frankie sits down. Anthony pulls out a seat from the table.

FRANKIE
You do not have permission to sit with us. Stand there and wait.

Ignacio the Frog's eyes light up with anger; he steps away from Anthony and Umberto. Anthony puts a calming hand on Ignacio's shoulder.

ANTHONY
Ignacio wait...

IGNACIO THE FROG
I have my pride!

ANTHONY
Don't let a useless thing like 'pride' get in the way of being alive. These guys are serious. Hear them out...even if they're rude.

IGNACIO THE FROG
Hijo de puta!

Ignacio SPITS on the carpet in protest...but does not leave.

The Gaunt Man points to his own platter of claws. Frankie lifts the indicated pincer- the one with the green whorl upon it- and proffers it to Ignacio the Frog.

FRANKIE
Please clean the shell off of this crab claw and offer it to my boss.

Enraged and red-faced, Ignacio snatches the crab claw, flicks away the (already cracked) shell and pokes it towards the Gaunt Man's face. The Gaunt Man takes the proffered pincer from Ignacio's hand and nods, aloof and incurious. He drops the claw onto the table-- he has no intention of eating it.

Daniel walks over to the table, observing the standing trio with his mismatched eyes. He takes a seat beside the Gaunt Man. Clarence, licking a fingertip and running it across his thick eyebrows, reaches the table and sits beside Daniel. The three Boston mobsters look up at Anthony, The Frog and Umberto.

CLARENCE
You are the foremost illicit entrepreneurs in Miami Beach, are you not?

ANTHONY
(nodding)
I'm a businessman.

IGNACIO THE FROG
I am also a businessman.

UMBERTO
I have operations. So?

DANIEL
Your businesses are being taken over. Miami Beach is ours. You know who we are?

Nobody responds.

DANIEL
(continuing)
That was a question.

The standing trio reluctantly nods.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Good. I like things to be expeditious. Explaining the myriad ways in which we can destroy you is a waste of breath, so let's just jettison the blarney.

The Gaunt Man coughs, weak and effeminate.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Until our crews have fully taken over your operations, you will pay us two thirds of your earnings. Short us one nickel and we will come at your families with box cutters and barbed wire boxing gloves.

The Gaunt Man waves his hand at the stricken trio, dismissing them. Ignacio, Anthony and Umberto- all shaken by the 'meeting'- leave.

Murchenko walks over to the table escorting a sun-tanned man with white hair, thick glasses and a smiling face. He wears a brown suit and matching derby, has a cigar in his mouth and a drink in his hand. He is COUNTY COMMISSIONER WATERHOUSE.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Commissioner Waterhouse. Pleased to make your acquaintance. Do take a seat.

Murchenko puts his thickly-knuckled hands on a chair and pulls it back from the table. The Commissioner sits. Loraline looks at Waterhouse; he grins and winks at her.

COMMISSIONER WATERHOUSE
You fellas enjoying this shindig?

CLARENCE
It is a stellar affair.

DANIEL
Real, real classy.

The Commissioner drags upon his cigar.

COMMISSIONER WATERHOUSE
I hear that there are some difficulties in Boston for...for businessmen such as yourself.

CLARENCE
We are setting up shop down here for a while...maybe permanently if things exceed our expectations.

Commissioner Waterhouse's eyes widen in surprise and alarm... though he tries to repress the latter from being too apparent. He glances at the Gaunt Man and then at Clarence and then at Daniel.

DANIEL
Is there anybody in town who might give entrepreneurs such as ourselves a tough time? The Police Chief for example?

COMMISSIONER WATERHOUSE
Kerrington? Yeah, he's an ornery one-- an out-spoken, holier-than-the-Pope prohibitionist. He's been raiding since his first night behind the big desk.

The Gaunt Man writes upon a white napkin with a gold and maroon-enameled pen. He hands the sheet of paper to Frankie.

FRANKIE
My boss wishes to know if Kerrington has any children.

Commissioner Waterhouse and Loraline look at the Gaunt Man: the eyes of the veiny, skeletal fellow are dull and lifeless stones.

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark, lit only by the curtain-obfuscated luminance of the moon. Eddie, wearing a forest green nightshirt and white socks, piles clothing linearly onto his stripped mattress. He pulls a blanket onto the bed, covering up the mound...which now resembles the body of a sleeping child.

Eddie pulls a football from beneath his bed and then withdraws a purloined flesh-colored stocking from his pocket. He stretches the fabric over the football. He slides a carrot tip between the taut stocking and the football, giving the fake head a nose.

Eddie rests the stocking-covered ball upon his pillow and draws the blanket halfway over it. He pulls a washcloth from his other nightshirt pocket and then plucks a yellow hair from his head. He holds the lone strand of hair alongside the washcloth: the hues match. He rests the washcloth atop the faux head. He steps back and observes the tableau. Even though this sleeping child simulacrum does not look remotely authentic, Eddie is pleased.

The boy walks over to the window and opens it. Cicadas CHIRP outside.

EXT. THE BEACH - NIGHT

Harold, wearing blue pajamas and carrying a large black boot in his left hand, walks barefoot along the beach, illumined by the moon. Eddie, still wearing his long nightshirt and socks, scampers towards him.

HAROLD
I was beginning to think that you'd gone yellow.

EDDIE
No way pal.

HAROLD
Did you bring the magnifying glass?

EDDIE
I did. Did you get your father's pistol?

HAROLD
I got this instead.

Harold raises the boot he is carrying; he swings it violently in the air, as if against some unseen foe.

EDDIE
I'd rather you pinched the gun.

HAROLD
In the right hands, a boot is as deadly as a gun.

EDDIE
I guess it's better than just throwing rocks at everything.

EXT. THE BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

The boys climb up the moderate incline, rambling around errant stones and beached tangles of seaweed. Eddie stops: fearful...eyes wide.

EDDIE
Man-o-wars!

Harold stops. Along the sand before the duo are more than a hundred PORTUGUESE MEN-O-WAR, iridescent jellyfish-like creatures, resembling diaphanous blue balloons.

EDDIE
(continuing)
Look!

Eddie points past the swollen, sheer men-o-war; Harold looks in the indicated direction. Thirty yards away, barely distinguishable in the shadow of a hanging cloud, stands a half-nude WOMAN, her legs, torso and shoulders draped with billowing and tattered white rags. She stares at the two boys and MOANS. In front of her are the ruins of yet another sand castle.

HAROLD
She stomped another one-- I'll kill her!

Harold runs forward, his father's abraded boot raised.

EDDIE
The man-o-wars!

Harold plants his bare foot upon one of the sheer, blue-hued creatures. POP. He SCREAMS and falls down, landing on his back amidst the beached sea-life. A man-o-war sticks to his neck. He SHRIEKS in pain.

Eddie looks down at his fallen friend and then back up toward the woman in the distance. She is gone.

Eddie goes to help Harold, picking his way cautiously through the stinging sea-life. The wind carries a sickly MOAN from the darkness beyond.

EXT. THE LION, SWIMMING POOL DECK - TWO IN THE MORNING

The dual j-shaped swimming pools shine with the yellow lights submerged along their turquoise walls. Seated on the wicker patio chair by the first pool is Kerrington, in tan slacks and a sleeveless undershirt that needs washing. Stanley, in gray slacks and a button-up shirt, carries two tall glasses toward Kerrington, each containing amber liquid, a mint leaf, ice and a lemon wedge.

Kerrington looks up at Stanley, his eyes flitting across the beverages.

STANLEY
Don't shoot-- it's only iced tea.

Stanley proffers one to Kerrington; he takes it.

KERRINGTON
I was hoping for ginger soda.

STANLEY
You're welcome.

Stanley sits in the wicker chair beside Kerrington, kicking off his worn loafers.

KERRINGTON
You're making a lot of overtime this week.

STANLEY
My wife likes dresses...and she's not getting any smaller.

Stanley drinks from his glass.

STANLEY
(continuing)
That's what I get for marrying a woman with Finnish heritage.
(he shrugs)
How long do you think you're going to stay here?

KERRINGTON
Until Joyce cools off. Probably another day or two.

STANLEY
Did you apologize for cracking her?

KERRINGTON
I tried to...but she wouldn't hear me out.

Kerrington shakes his head in irritation; he drinks a little more iced tea. Stanley, sipping his beverage, observes his boss.

STANLEY
Are you sorry?

KERRINGTON
I'm sorry I lost control...and I'm sorry I hit a woman.

STANLEY
Do you love her?

KERRINGTON
No.

Stanley is surprised by Kerrington's response.

STANLEY
Did you ever?

Kerrington shrugs.

KERRINGTON
I don't think that I did. Not truly.

STANLEY
Why'd you marry her?

KERRINGTON
I was young. I was attracted to her. I thought that she would make a good mother...and she has, though she does tend to go on at times.

Kerrington swirls his iced tea and shakes his head. He SIGHS.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
She's been running around on me for years...but she does right by Eddie so I pretend not to notice.

Kerrington stares at the small ripples that glide across the turquoise pool from the pumping vents. He taps his iced tea glass with his wedding band: CLINK, CLINK, CLINK.

STANLEY
Are you sure that she's been...unfaithful?

Kerrington taps his ring against the glass again: CLINK, CLINK, CLINK.

KERRINGTON
The clues are there-- the types of anomalies that are very obvious to someone who was a detective for nineteen years. Smells... stains...errant hairs...light abrasions...an odd taste on her lips...

Kerrington looks at the submerged yellow light, which wobbles and shimmies beneath the surface ripples.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
I just want Eddie to have a happy childhood and a good life... nothing means more to me than that. Nothing even comes close.

Kerrington swirls the iced tea around, the mint leaf spinning...spinning...

INT. THE LION, HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Turnip-Toe, in his yellow bellhop uniform and cap, and a skinny brunette woman of fifty named MARTHA sit behind the roaring Lion bust which surmounts the front desk.

MARTHA
I cannot believe that he did this to me. I cannot!

Turnip-Toe rolls his eyes-- he has heard this complaint all night. He studies the newspaper sitting before him, attempting to ignore Martha's whining.

MARTHA
(continuing)
I am the wife. She is the receptionist. It is obvious who should have accompanied him to the fiesta this e-

TURNIP-TOE
You read lots of books with big words-- do you know what this one means?

Turnip-Toe points to the newspaper; Martha looks at the word and shakes her head.

MARTHA
Ask the receptionist, she is no doubt a qualified lexicographer as well!

The frosted front doors open. Loraline walks in, grimacing.

MARTHA
(continuing)
Have you seen Ignacio and his little hussy?

Loraline, walking stiffly and with pained steps, shakes her head, 'no.'

INT. THE LION, LORALINE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The hotel room has been customized to Loraline's taste: the blankets, wallpaper and curtains are royal blue. Candles of various sizes sit about the enclosure, half-melted; a menorah sits atop her cracked antique bureau. Loraline walks in, shutting and locking the door behind her.

She kisses her index and middle finger and presses them to the mezuzah nailed within the door frame. She lifts her left foot, pries off her violet high-heel shoe, discards it, THUNK; lifts her right foot, pries off her other shoe and discards it, THUNK.

On bare feet, she pads over to her bed upon which sits a very worn stuffed elephant. Upon the night stand sits a ceramic bowl with water, beside which lies a folded white rag.

Loraline hikes up her dress, sits on the edge of the bed, and swings her left leg out. Her inner thigh is bruised and dappled with dried semen. She takes the rag from the night stand, dips it into the bowl, squeezes out the excess and gently wipes away the waxy specks.

She returns the cloth to the water, dips it in, wrings it out and brings it back to her inner thigh. Loraline presses the saturated fabric firmly to the bruise; she inhales sharply through her teeth...wincing as the pain climbs up her body.

Outside her open window she hears a dim SPLASH. Loraline looks at the clock: the arms of the hand-wound brass bell apparatus indicate two fifty-two; the second dial points to the letters 'AM'. Tucking the moist cloth further between her legs, Loraline stands and hobbles over to the open window.

She looks down: two floors below, Stanley swims a lap. Seated upon a wicker chair beside the j-shaped pool is Kerrington.

Loraline stares at Kerrington; she raises her left hand to her lips and gently bites her index finger. She is conflicted about whether or not to approach him with what she has overheard this evening...

KERRINGTON
Stanley, you're a grade-A idiot.

Loraline shakes her head and walks away from the window.

EXT. KERRINGTON'S HOUSE - SAME

The night has gotten darker; the moon has almost set. Eddie, still wearing his blue nightshirt and (now filthy) white socks, approaches the side of the house, creeping towards his opened window. He shoves his magnifying glass into his nightshirt pocket.

Eddie does not notice the two wide black cars parked down the road, beside a cluster of golden shower trees.

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is utterly dark, excepting only the gray square of the window. Eddie's silhouette darkens the pane; he lifts the glass and clambers inside.

A hand grabs Eddie by the neck. The boy SQUEALS. Another hand SLAMS the window shut.

CLICK. The lights turn on.

Murchenko (Daniel's thug) holds Eddie by the throat with a swollen-knuckle hand. Frankie (the Gaunt Man's chatty toady) sits on the bed, next to Joyce, who herself lies face down upon the mattress. Frankie has a gun pressed to the back of her head.

Eddie sees his mother; he kicks and flails about.

EDDIE
Mom, mom! Let my mom go, let my mom go!

Murchenko shakes Eddie, like a mongoose with a mouse in its mouth. The boy starts to CRY.

JOYCE
Leave him alone you bastards, he's ju-

BLAM. The room is quiet. Smoke rises from a hole in the mattress beside Joyce's head. She claps a hand over her left ear, which is ringing and singed.

FRANKIE
Be calm. We are here to talk to your husband...to make a business proposal to him, nothing more.

JOYCE
You don't know my husband one bit if you think he'll go along with you or whoever you represent.

FRANKIE
If that's how he is, you might want to recommend that he has an epiphany...unless you want to get crammed in that doghouse alongside that dead mutt.

Eddie's face starts to redden; he COUGHS and squirms. His small hands paw feebly at Murchenko's thick-knuckled grip.

FRANKIE
(continuing)
You're choking the kid-- let go of his throat.

Murchenko drops Eddie. The boy THUDS upon the carpet. Murchenko then steps on Eddie's back. The boy COUGHS; his body spasms. Murchenko rests a little more weight on the foot pinning Eddie. SNAP.

Eddie SHRIEKS.

FRANKIE
(continuing)
Careful...don't break his ribs.

Eddie SCREAMS and CRIES hysterically.

Murchenko's eyes redden; he shakes his head, trying to clear his mind. He rubs his left temple, above which a blue vein pulsates.

FRANKIE
(continuing)
That headache assailing you?

Murchenko nods his head.

MURCHENKO
Yeah.

Murchenko punches the wall with his left fist, C-CRACK; the plaster buckles, motes swirling around a toaster-sized indentation. He punches the wall with his right fist, C-C-CRACK; a second crater sits beside the first. Murchenko looks at his fists; all of his knuckles are bleeding.

FRANKIE
Better?

Murchenko nods and SIGHS, relieved.

FRANKIE
(continuing; to Joyce)
Murchenko here wanted to be a cop-- just like your husband. Can you believe it?

Joyce does not respond. Frankie SPANKS her; she suppresses a yelp.

FRANKIE
(continuing)
So when should we expect the bipedal paradigm of moral behavior?

JOYCE
I told you-- I don't know where he is...or even if he'll come back tonight. He doesn't tell me everything.

FRANKIE
I can wait...and Murchenko can hit things.

EXT. THE LION, DUAL SWIMMING POOL AREA - SAME

Stanley climbs out of the pool, dripping wet in his red trunks. He squints while he paws around on a wooden table, feeling for his glasses. Kerrington studies the list of names on the clipboard in his lap.

STANLEY
If you and Joyce are on speaking terms, Jan and I would like to have you over-

WOMAN'S VOICE
Excuse me.

Kerrington and Stanley look over toward the hotel; they see Loraline standing before the french-styled deck doors. She wears a royal blue robe and white slippers.

KERRINGTON
It's the whore.

Loraline eyes Kerrington balefully.

LORALINE
You're a very rude and ill-tempered man.

KERRINGTON
And you're a beautiful and educated woman who for some reason is a whore.

LORALINE
Quit calling me that.

KERRINGTON
Stop whoring if you don't like being called one.

LORALINE
I have a name.

KERRINGTON
Well, don't keep Stanley and me in suspense. What is it?

LORALINE
Laura Lineski and I came here to do you a favor...though you aren't making it very easy.

KERRINGTON
I don't need any favors from-

LORALINE
Do you have a boy named Eddie?

Kerrington stiffens.

He stares hard at Loraline; he is not breathing.

LORALINE
(continuing)
His life may be in danger.

Kerrington lunges out of his chair and runs towards the door. Stanley grabs his clothing and follows.

KERRINGTON
(to Stanley)
Get your guns and meet me at my car.

Kerrington grabs the spiral handle to the deck door and flings it wide.

KERRINGTON
(continuing; to Loraline)
Laura Lineski-- you'd better be here when I get back.

Kerrington flies through the door, into the hotel.

CUT TO:

INT. KERRINGTON'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Kerrington, his mouth a thin crack beneath his rusty mustache, grips the wheel of his cyclopean vehicle; he pushes the car's engine to its ROARING, SHUDDERING limit. Stanley, wearing wet clothing, sits beside him, checking the rounds in the chambers of his revolver.

He sets the handgun down and then CRACKS open a shotgun and plugs in two thick red shells.

KERRINGTON
I know you love guns, but stick to the itinerary. My family is in there-- stray bullets are as deadly as the ones bad guys fire.

Stanley closes the shotgun, CLACK, and pumps it, CLA-CLACK.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Do not shoot unless you are fired upon.

STANLEY
I won't.

KERRINGTON
And if you shoot, go for a leg, a shoulder or a gutshot: if a gangster gets dead in Miami Beach, the crimelords will become invested in our town. Shoot to wound.

STANLEY
Intersection.

The car ROARS forward, trees and bushes and houses mere smears of color on either side. Kerrington looks left; Stanley looks right.

STANLEY
(continuing)
Clear.

EXT. CREST AVENUE INTERSECTION - SAME

Kerrington's green vehicle speeds past the red stop flag jutting from the automated traffic box; the monstrous car ROARS through the intersection.

INT. KERRINGTON'S CAR - SAME

STANLEY
So you think these are Beantown gangsters?

KERRINGTON
Or those guys from Chi-Town. No local muscle has the guts for a prank like this.

EXT. KERRINGTON'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The headlights are off on Kerrington's vehicle; the car glides quietly past the two cars parked beside the outlying trees.

Behind the dual-pane windshield, Kerrington spins the wheel, steering the car onto the gravel driveway.

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - SAME

The bearded popinjay Frankie has taken off his tuxedo jacket; the barrel of the pistol in his left hand is pressed into Joyce's neck. In Frankie's lap is an issue of the pulp magazine 'Ghastly Crime'; he reads a story entitled, 'The Very Unlikely Case of the Cracked Obsidian Tooth.'

Murchenko, seated on the floor, taps his left fist against the iron rail of the bed frame: CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK. Eddie lies face down on the floor next to him, his blue nightshirt soiled; Murchenko absently grips the boy's hair with his right hand. Again, upon the iron bedframe, the thug raps his abraded left knuckles: CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK.

SLAM. Frankie and Murchenko exchange glances and then look through the room's open door, into the unlit hall outside. Frankie closes the pulp, tosses it aside and tightens his grip on his pistol.

FOOTSTEPS proceed up the dark hall outside.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Joyce. Eddie. Are you still awake?

Joyce, confused by the voice she hears, looks up from the bed toward the door.

FRANKIE
(whispered to Joyce)
Tell him to come in here...in a loving and wifely manner.

Murchenko clamps a meaty hand over Eddie's mouth; the boy WHIMPERS. Murchenko raps the child's forehead with his bleeding knuckles- CLACK!- leaving four red marks.

MURCHENKO
(to Eddie)
Quiet.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Where are you?

JOYCE
We're in Eddie's room, dear.

The FOOTSTEPS grow louder; CLICK; yellow light illumines the hallway's wooden walls. Frankie presses the gun barrel harder into Joyce's neck while staring through the door. Murchenko watches the approaching man's shadow slide up the hallway floor.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I bought you those shoes you asked for.

Joyce's eyes flicker to the window; Kerrington, gun in hand, is climbing inside, behind the turned heads of Frankie and Murchenko.

Stanley, wearing a wet suit, steps into the doorway, holding a shoebox in his left hand-- his right hand is thrust through a hole in the bottom of the box.

STANLEY
Where's my loving and devoted wife?

Joyce rolls out from under Frankie's muzzle, off of the bed and onto the floor with a THUNK. Stanley, the shoebox extended before him, lunges at Frankie.

Kerrington CRACKS the back of Murchenko's small head with the butt of his gun. Murchenko lets go of Eddie and reels in pain, clutching the red weal at the base of his skull. He swings a big fist at Kerrington, catching him in the side with his grossly swollen knuckles. THUD. Kerrington GRUNTS and then CRACKS Murchenko in the left temple with the butt of his gun; Murchenko GRUNTS and looses consciousness.

Stanley jams the shoebox against Frankie's forehead.

STANLEY
(continuing)
You'd better believe that there aren't shoes in here. Drop that gun or I'll let all of the stinky air out of your head.

Frankie glances at MURCHENKO and then at Stanley; he releases his gun.

Kerrington drops to his knees beside Eddie; he scoops his son up in his arms. Eddie looks up and sees his father's face. Joyce crawls over beside Kerrington.

EDDIE
Did you get 'em?

Kerrington nods.

KERRINGTON
You alright buster?

EDDIE
My side...my side hurts.

Kerrington lifts Eddie's blue nightshirt: the boy's entire left side is badly bruised, his third rib bulges oddly beneath the purplish-red skin, broken.

Kerrington looks up at Frankie; the thug stands two yards away, his hands in the air; Stanley presses the shoebox to his neck. Kerrington's eyes are ablaze with hatred.

STANLEY
(to Frankie)
Hands behind your back.

FRANKIE
(to Kerrington)
I have a proposition from the gentlemen-

Kerrington raises his pistol and trains it at Frankie's face.

KERRINGTON
This is my response to any message you deliver.

Kerrington's anger storms through him, a maelstrom of hatred he can barely control. He grits his teeth, his mouth a thin hairline crevasse beneath his mustache; he pounds his left fist into the floor repeatedly in an effort to control himself: THWACK, THWACK, THWACK.

Stanley SNAPS and locks the handcuffs around Frankie's wrists.

JOYCE
(to Stanley)
Get that man the hell out of here. Now.

Stanley indelicately yanks Frankie around and then pushes him through the door. Kerrington exhales slowly, calming himself. His eyes fall on Murchenko's sprawled, unconscious body; he looks at the giant man's wrists and shakes his head, irritated.

KERRINGTON
(to Joyce)
The cuffs won't fit on that one.
I'll have to toss him in the trunk.
(to Eddie)
Can you hold on another couple of minutes buster?

Eddie nods and presses his tear-smeared face into Kerrington's chest. The Chief's anger is slowly replaced with relief. Joyce reaches over and strokes Eddie's face with her long fingers; the boy smiles.

Kerrington looks at his wife and notices for the first time that her left ear is blackened and bleeding.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
You okay Joyce?

Joyce nods.

JOYCE
A bit deaf, but yeah. Let's get Eddie checked out.

CUT TO:

EXT. KERRINGTON'S HOUSE - JUST BEFORE DAWN

The eastern sky is a dark, dark gray. Kerrington and Stanley heave Murchenko headfirst into the trunk of the vehicle- WHOOOM!- and then SLAM it shut. Frankie, handcuffed, his mouth sealed with duct tape, lies face down in the gravel; he watches the two policemen approach him, their feet CRUNCHING the white, chalky stones.

Kerrington kicks Frankie in the side. The bearded toady GRUNTS.

KERRINGTON
Up.

Frankie rolls onto his side and then wobbles onto his knees. Stanley grabs the diminutive man's collar and yanks him up to his feet. Stanley walks him to the car and shoves him inside, climbing in after him.

Kerrington drops to his knees and vomits upon the gravel, soaking the stones. His entire body shakes with fear and rage. He heaves again but nothing comes up.

JOYCE
Bill?

Kerrington looks at the patio; Joyce, her ear covered with gauze, stands at the steps holding Eddie.

EDDIE
Dad, you okay?

Kerrington wipes his mouth, spits, wipes his mouth again, nods and stands up.

KERRINGTON
I'm fine.

EDDIE
I want to see you toss those bad men into the hoosegow!

Kerrington smiles and walks over to Joyce and Eddie. He kisses Eddie on the forehead and then Joyce on the cheek.

KERRINGTON
Let's get you two to the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAWN

Joyce sits in a wooden-frame chair beside the bed in which Eddie lies asleep. Next to her, in another such chair, sits her cherub-faced brother Reginald, still wearing his waiter tuxedo from the shindig. The siblings are holding hands. They stare out through the open window, which admits a view of downtown Miami: upon two parallel streets, PAPER BOYS on bicycles hurl newspapers at the doors of subscribers, the white oblongs spinning in the gloom of the new, cloudy day.

Kerrington walks into the room; Joyce looks up at him and mouths the word, 'Hi'; Reginald ignores him. Kerrington points to Eddie. Joyce nods and smiles. Kerrington looks at Eddie for a lingering moment and then motions for his wife to follow him outside.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - SAME

The long corridor is only half-lit at this early hour. A NURSE rolls a steel cart up the hall, myriad clear bottles CLINKING together like jingling bells. Kerrington walks into the passageway, followed by Joyce.

KERRINGTON
You alright?

JOYCE
I am.

Kerrington looks into her eyes...and in them sees strength. He nods.

KERRINGTON
I talked to the doctor-- he said that Eddie will be fine on a boat as long as he takes it easy and lets his ribs mend.

JOYCE
Are we going on a boat?

KERRINGTON
A cruise ship. You and Eddie-- until things get cleared up.

JOYCE
Isn't there some other place we could go? We can't afford cruise ship tickets.

KERRINGTON
I am not arguing about finances Joyce. The ship's the safest, surest, quickest way for you two to disappear.

Joyce looks at her husband, concern surfacing on her long, tired face.

JOYCE
How bad are things going to get?

KERRINGTON
I don't know.

Joyce opens her mouth to respond, but says nothing. She closes her eyes for a moment and shakes her head.

JOYCE
For god's sake, be careful. I don't want to end up like Halloway's wife...or Whetson's.

KERRINGTON
I'll be careful.

INT. TAXI CAB - MORNING

Eddie, Joyce and Kerrington sit in the taxi. The drab gray day makes the passing mango, golden shower and palm trees look like faded old photos.

KERRINGTON
(to the driver)
Please hurry.

The DRIVER, a plump thirty year-old fellow, nods. The car turns onto a road that parallels the beach. Joyce holds Kerrington's hand; they both stare out of the window, at the ocean. Eddie's face lights up.

EDDIE
I almost forgot to tell you!

KERRINGTON
What?

EDDIE
I solved the case!

Kerrington looks at Joyce; Joyce shakes her head and shrugs.

KERRINGTON
What case is that, buster?

EDDIE
The bride from Philadelphia-- the one who went missing.

The taxi cab comes to the end of the wharf and abruptly stops. Kerrington digs into his pocket. The Driver turns back to face the family.

DRIVER
Here we are folks. Thirty-five cents. I promise you that I will not refuse a tip.

KERRINGTON
(to Eddie)
Tell me about it when you get back.

Kerrington gives the Driver a handful of change and then looks at his wife and son.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
It's time.

Joyce nods; Eddie's eyes fill with tears. CLUNK. The Driver opens the door for them from the outside. Kerrington looks at his wife and son-- a momentary glimpse before marshalling them onward.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Let's go.

They exit the cab.

INT. MIAMI BEACH POLICE PRECINCT, KERRINGTON'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Kerrington sits behind his enormous desk, his fan (and its shimmering tinsel) noisily CLATTERING. He has the phone receiver pressed to his ear; his mouth is inches from the conical mouthpiece.

KERRINGTON
This is the Police Chief of Miami Beach. I need to speak with the Mayor of Boston, Radford Wilson.

EXT. THE BEACH - TEN O'CLOCK

The turquoise tide climbs up the moistened sand and over the sprawled, unconscious figure of Charles; he is still dressed in his tattered wedding tuxedo. In his left hand he holds an empty champagne bottle; in his right hand he holds an empty wine bottle.

A powerful wave climbs up the shore and over Charles' body. Salt water floods inside his open mouth. He begins to CHOKE.

Charles sits up, spitting out the accidentally inhaled water. He squints and surveys the drab horizon: there is no delineation between the ocean and the sky. He stands up.

The abandoned groom looks at the bottles clenched in either hand and then shudders, nauseated. He hurls them into the water. SPLASH. SPLASH.

He turns around and staggers up the beach. Some anomalous rise in the nearby sand grabs his attention. He walks towards the aberration.

Charles comes upon the swelling...shocked by what he sees. A face six feet long has been sculpted in the sand. The visage is of a beautiful woman with a queenly forehead, a slightly up-turned nose and high cheek bones; the face lies in a bed of sand-wrought hair, long and wavy.

Charles stares at the sculpture, enthralled by the enormous eyes that stare up at him. He kneels beside the visage. He reaches a tremulous hand towards it.

CHARLES
Carol...

Charles touches his index finger to the near cheek of the enormous face.

CHARLES
(continuing)
I dream of you...every night.

In the distance, a strong wave folds in upon itself with a loud CRASH.

CHARLES
(continuing)
And when I wake up...when the dream ends...

Charles shakes his head. He gently strokes the giant visage's left cheek, careful not to disturb the sand or in any way ruin the integrity of the sculpture.

INT. MIAMI BEACH POLICE PRECINCT, MEETING AREA - NOON

Kerrington stands behind the podium, before the chalkboard; beside him stands Stanley. The room is filled with twenty-five OFFICERS, ranging from twenty to sixty. Industrial fans ROAR in each of the room's corners.

KERRINGTON
Two toughs affiliated with separate Boston outfits broke into my house last night, assaulted my wife and child and probably planned to do worse if I'd not apprehended them...or proved acquiescent to their boss' stipulations.

The Officers stare at Kerrington-- most of them are horror-stricken. The Chief of Police lets his words settle.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
We must rout out these Beantown gangsters before they establish a foothold in our town. But fix this in your brains: I want NO KILLING. Once we kill one of them, they will respond in kind... and judging from the organizations involved- and last night's activities- they will come at our loved ones first. We need to do this today, because operations like Daniel Brownley's, Clarence O'Doershell's and Albert Fleischen's work fast.
(more)

KERRINGTON (cont'd)
These men are efficient and immoral and will-through bribes, intimidation and violence- quickly gain influence over local small-timers and politicians as well as many men sitting right here in this very room.

Kerrington pointedly eyes a Young Officer in the second row and an Old Officer in the third row.

STANLEY
A few of you were not surprised by the announcement the Chief made regarding the situation at his house last night...and I do not think it's because you are unrecognized telepaths. I've already noted who you are. My assumption is that a) your families are in danger, b) you are on the take or c) you REALLY hate the Chief. Regardless, you've got desk duty until we clean up this situation.

KERRINGTON
This morning I was on the phone with the Mayor of Boston, Radford 'Firebrand' Wilson. He assured me that if we get these mobsters back to Beantown, he will mete out justice there. A train with Feds and Boston badges arrives tomorrow morning: we are putting these vile men on that train, ridding Miami Beach of them. Fortunately for us, the majority of their muscle is in Boston- either hiding or imprisoned- so we just have to pinch the head guys.

EXT. HORSE TRACK - ONE O'CLOCK

There are twenty rows of white-painted wooden benches on one side of the oval-shaped racing track, all of which is lit drably by the gray vault above. SPECTATORS watch the horses churn dirt with a tattoo of THUNDERING hoofs, the beasts urgently coaxed by the JOCKEYS atop them. Amidst those spectators, three rows from the track, are Stumpy Stubbs and his nineteen year old admirer Madeline; the latter sits beneath a dark green, white-dotted parasol.

The horses round the track immediately before the duo, THUNDEROUSLY so. Some of the beasts WHINNY, all are lathered with sweat; their muscles are ingots of steel beneath their glossy coats.

STUMPY STUBBS
What's the rush? A new mare with dimples, a beauty mark and a wayward nature?

Madeline GIGGLES. Stumpy turns to Madeline and kisses her upon the lips. SMECK. She looks into his wide eyes and smiles; he grins back.

The square loudspeaker hanging on a nearby pole CRACKLES.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
In the final lap, Stormchaser leads, followed closely by Pigs-in-a-Blanket, Liberator, Victor the Victor, Mephistopheles, Shakespeare's Four-Legged Brother, Ramses Rex and- at a distance- El Horso.

Stumpy Stubbs turns his head to the gray horse, ten lengths behind the penultimate one: El Horso.

STUMPY STUBBS
That's it El Horso!

MADELINE
You put your money on him? But he looks positively ill.

STUMPY STUBBS
I put my money on all of the horses- so I win no matter what happens- but I have a separate bet with Clarence as to how many times El Horso will come in last. Once more and I win five hundred bucks.

Stumpy turns his head around; higher in the stands sits Clarence, his thick eyebrows and mustache sitting like black slugs upon his face. Beside him sit his wife Elena (her hair pulled tautly back as always) and his three teenage Children--two girls and a boy.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing; calling up to Clarence)
El Horso looks pretty whipped.

Clarence grins.

CLARENCE
He is pacing himself for his final surge.

STUMPY STUBBS
They're on the last lap.

Stumpy turns back to the track to glance at El Horso. The silent film star then spins back to the Beantown gangster.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
I think El Horso is pondering the possibility of an afternoon nap.

Clarence dismisses Stumpy with a flick of his hand.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
His jockey is reading a magazine!

Stumpy CACKLES and turns back to face the race.

MADELINE
(to Stumpy)
You are positively loony harassing that...type of man...that way.

STUMPY STUBBS
We grew up together-- two poor Irish kids in Boston. He's the one who got me off of the chitlin circuit and onto Broadway.

MADELINE
Those...types of men...make me nervous.

STUMPY STUBBS
Me too...but we have history.

Madeline nods. Stumpy looks up at the gray sky, wrinkling his mouth in distaste. He shakes his head, looks at the horses and then at Madeline.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
The weather is not great for a marriage proposal, but what the hell? How about it Madeline-- do you want to be Mrs. Stubbs?

Madeline, shocked, stares at Stumpy.

MADELINE
Are you serious?

STUMPY STUBBS
If you say yes I am.

Madeline, still shocked, stares at Stumpy.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
Think about it if you're not sure. I'll give you until El Horso finishes.

Madeline starts to shake.

MADELINE
If this is some kind of joke...

The jester expression Stumpy typically wears yields to a very serious face.

STUMPY STUBBS
I am not joking.

MADELINE
Why me?

STUMPY STUBBS
You're sweet and you're pretty. You make a good corned beef and cabbage. You laugh at my jokes. And I love you.

MADELINE
You really want to marry me?

STUMPY STUBBS
Yes.

Madeline's eyes fill with tears.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
And Stormchaser crosses the line, followed closely by Pigs-in-a-Blanket, Liberator, Victor the Victor, Mephistopheles, Ramses Rex and Shakespeare's Four-Legged Brother. El Horso has yet to finish.

Higher up in the stands, Clarence shakes his head, angrily.

Madeline and Stumpy observe El Horso, slowly galloping toward the finish line, coaxed by his disinterested jockey. The horse does not look well.

Stumpy looks back at Madeline. She wipes the tears from her eyes, looks at Stumpy and nods her head 'yes'.

STUMPY STUBBS
Swell. Yardley and Irish will be very pleased.

Stumpy grabs Madeline by the shoulders and kisses her. She drops her parasol and embraces him passionately.

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen, El Horso has collapsed!

EXT. DUCK POND - TWO O'CLOCK

In the distance behind the pond, the horse track is visible, as is a tall pink building with narrow windows: the Miami Beach Sanitarium. The pond- itself shaped like a cashew- is in a sunken area in the center of a mango tree-circumscribed park. Clarence, Elena and their Children sit on a blanket in the shade, watching the blue-green ducks glide across the tranquil water.

The Son reaches for the wicker picnic basket. Elena's eyes flicker to his onrushing fingers. She SLAPS his hand away, grabs the basket, lifts it up and sets it down far from his reach. She then tightens her hair, pulling it so taut that it shines like obsidian.

Clarence wipes the sweat from his thick eyebrows with a silk handkerchief, his blue eyes locked on the gliding ducks.

CLARENCE
I have three answers to your question, children...though in truth they are just hypotheses and no more.

Clarence points to the foremost duck; his silent Children look at the bird.

CLARENCE
(continuing)
What does that fowl fellow think about all day, you asked? Perhaps he envies svelte birds better suited to flying than he?
(more)

CLARENCE (cont'd)
Maybe he questions why his dead brethren are so often combined with oranges when murdered by Frenchmen? Or perchance he tacitly ponders why humans spell his squawking exclamations with the letters Q-U-A-C-K?

The silent Children nod; Clarence grins.

ELENA
(to the Children)
You may speak.

SON
I think he's mad at the skinny birds.

OLDER DAUGHTER
I don't like to eat duck.

YOUNGER DAUGHTER
You two are stupid, you don't-

ELENA
Quiet, all of you.

The Children are silent once again. Elena opens the picnic basket.

MALE VOICE
Clarence and Elena O'Doershell, raise your hands in the air and slowly stand.

Clarence looks up. Kerrington, Stanley and five uniformed OFFICERS- all with raised guns- walk along the perimeter of the park towards him, his wife and his children. Clarence looks at Elena; she looks down into the picnic basket. Inside the basket are three wedges of cheese, two bottles of wine and a revolver.

KERRINGTON
Hands up. Now.

The seven policemen press closer, guns raised; Clarence and Elena exchange furtive glances.

STANLEY
You micks deaf? Hands in the air or your children become little gangster orphans.

KERRINGTON
(muttered to Stanley)
Don't get cute.

CLARENCE
What's the charge officer?

KERRINGTON
It was a series of prohibition violations, but now add resisting arrest to the list.

STANLEY
I bet there's some hooch in that basket too.

Clarence and Elena shake their heads in dismay; they rise, hands raised, palms up. Kerrington and Stanley holster their pistols and yank handcuffs from their belts, the metal rings spinning in the sun like silver fire.

KERRINGTON
Elena and Clarence O'Doershell, you are under arrest.

The Children grin.

INT. THE LION, HOTEL LOBBY - TWILIGHT

The raven-haired Receptionist and Turnip-Toe sit in the lobby, behind the lion-head surmounted front desk. The door opens, admitting three TOUGHS, all stocky men wearing fedoras, striped short-sleeved button-up shirts and white slacks. One has a Broken Nose, one has a Mustache and one speaks with a Lisp. Following these broad gentlemen inside are Daniel, carrying a suitcase and wearing a Hawaiian shirt, a derby and bermuda shorts, and the Gaunt Man, carrying a glass of ice water and wearing gray slacks and a gray linen short-sleeved button up shirt.

RECEPTIONIST
Good evening gentlemen and welcome to The Lion, where you'll have a roaring good time, we promise!

Daniel smiles at the Receptionist.

DANIEL
We'd like to chew words with Ignacio the Frog.

RECEPTIONIST
And who should I say is requesting his company?

DANIEL
His bosses...and we ain't
'requesting'.

The Receptionist picks up the telephone earpiece and dials three numbers; she listens.

RECEPTIONIST
Some gentlemen are here to see
you-- they claim to be your bosses.

The Receptionist winces and then blanches at the obscenities pouring from the receiver. A moment later she hangs up; she looks at Daniel and grins.

RECEPTIONIST
(continuing)
Ignacio will be with you shortly.

DANIEL
Have you- by any chance- a stapler
I can borrow?

RECEPTIONIST
I do.

INT. THE LION, SPEAKEASY - SAME

Ignacio the Frog, wearing a beige linen suit, stands behind the bar of the empty speakeasy. He brings a tiny mascara brush away from his eyelashes and examines his reflection in the liquor-obfuscated mirror on the wall. His bulbous eyes stand out prominently upon his face.

IGNACIO THE FROG
'Bosses'! I am the regal one.
Hmmph. Los gran reyes de comiendo
mierda. Bosses!

BZZZZZZT. Ignacio's eyes widen; he sets the mascara brush down and then anxiously turns to face the door.

IGNACIO THE FROG
(continuing)
No, no, no. Do not-

The door atop the six steps BURSTS open, SLAMMING against the wall. The Receptionist sails through the air, SLAMMING upon the ground. Her lip, cheek and left eye are swollen from the beating she received moments ago; three staples shine on her forehead. Turnip-Toe tumbles inside, BANGING his battered face on the floor beside her.

The three toughs- Broken Nose, Lisp and Mustache- walk inside the speakeasy, followed by Daniel and the Gaunt Man.

DANIEL
Ignacio the Frog.

Ignacio pales with fear; he starts to shake. The Gaunt Man closes the door behind him.

IGNACIO THE FROG
Good evening gentlemen.

The three toughs walk up to the bar, each pulls out a stool and takes a seat. Daniel SLAMS his suitcase upon the bar, and beside it he SLAMS a tall green stapler. The Gaunt Man rubs an ice cube along his pale, veiny forehead; beads of melting water drip down his face like translucent slugs.

Ignacio lifts a gray tool box from atop the liquor cabinet and sets it upon the table.

IGNACIO THE FROG
(continuing)
I have your money-

The Gaunt Man shakes his head, 'no'.

DANIEL
The Police Chief ambushed our men. The only way that could've happened was if he was tipped off.

Ignacio is horror-struck; he shakes his head in fervent denial. Daniel opens his suitcase: it is filled with coruscating shards of broken glass.

DANIEL
(continuing)
A girl in your employ named Loraline overheard our plan, prior to it being enacted. That a whore would jeopardize her life, their lives...
(pointing to Turnip-Toe and the Receptionist)
...and your life for some grumpy cop is...is very surprising.

IGNACIO THE FROG
Loraline would not do such a thing, I promise-

Daniel's mismatched eyes bore into Ignacio.

DANIEL
The only other possibility is that she told you, and since you were steamed about our meeting- and no doubt still are- YOU squealed to the chumps in blue.

Ignacio's mouth opens and shuts like a fish tossed on a hot dock, yet no words emerge.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Who is it? You or the whore? It had to be one of you.

Tears runs down Ignacio's face; he shakes his head in denial.

Daniel withdraws a gun and points it at the head of the raven-haired Receptionist, prostrate on the floor.

IGNACIO THE FROG
Don't, don't! It wasn't me, I swear to dios!

DANIEL
Where is the whore?

IGNACIO THE FROG
She went away to Jacksonville to visit her family.

Daniel stares at Ignacio and shakes his head.

DANIEL
That ain't what the receptionist said.

Daniel walks over to the Receptionist and presses his gun to the back of her skull, pointing the barrel down. She shudders. Turnip-Toe shields his face and shuts his eyes.

IGNACIO THE FROG
No, no, no, n-

BLAM. The Receptionist's brains burst out of her SHRIEKING mouth, in a clumpy puddle upon the floor.

Daniel walks back to the bar.

DANIEL
Unless you want that nigger's tar splattered all over this room, you'll jettison the blarney.

IGNACIO THE FROG
She is out with a client-- I do not know his address.

DANIEL
When will she be back?

Ignacio's gaze flickers to the dead Receptionist on the floor. He then looks up, his melancholic eyes bulging like veiny pool balls at Daniel.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Let me guess...you loved her? Well let me tell you something, you dumb spic: this ain't the time to get sentimental.

Ignacio plunges his hand into a bucket of water- SPLOOSH- and from it draws out a revolver; the tough with the Broken Nose grabs his forearm and SNAPS it in half, giving him a second elbow. Ignacio SHRIEKS. The tough then yanks Ignacio forward by his broken arm, pulling the pudgy man into the bar.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Beantown mouthwash.

The tough with the Mustache pulls canvas gloves over his hands; he thrusts his protected digits into the shards of glass.

DANIEL
(continuing)
From here on out, you answer our questions by nodding. Each lie you tell us results in a dead relative-- starting with your mother in her Lauderdale hacienda.

Daniel picks up the stapler. The tough with the Mustache shoves shards of glass into Ignacio's mouth. The hispanic man's SCREAMING turns into a wet, horrible GURGLING...

CUT TO:

INT. THE LION, HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

The three toughs walk into the lobby, followed by Daniel and the Gaunt Man. The Gaunt Man shuts the door behind him and proceeds with the rest of the gang toward the elevator door.

DANIEL
Ooops...forgot about the nigger.

INT. THE LION, SPEAKEASY - MOMENTS LATER

Ignacio lies dead upon the floor of the speakeasy, his lips stapled firmly shut. Glass shards have worn their way through his cheeks, nostrils and windpipe, like diamonds on piles of ground beef. Turnip-Toe, his left eye swollen and his lip burst and bleeding, crawls past the Receptionist's corpse, towards the bar.

The door to the speakeasy opens. The tough with the Lisp walks inside and then aims his gun at Turnip-Toe.

LISPING TOUGH
That was pretty clever...playing possum like that.

BLAM. Turnip-Toe grabs his stomach and collapses.

INT. THE LION, CENTRAL ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

The dark wood panelling of the elevator is circumscribed by gold trim. The three toughs, Daniel and the Gaunt Man ascend.

INT. THE LION, SPEAKEASY - MOMENTS LATER

Turnip-Toe crawls toward the bar, holding his stomach. He reaches Ignacio's mutilated corpse. The bleeding, trembling African American bellhop reaches his left hand toward Ignacio's discarded pistol, lying upon the floor.

Turnip-Toe tucks the pistol into his belt; he raises himself to the bar and reaches for the phone. He grabs the receiver and raises it to his ear. He spits blood onto the counter and spins the dial with a shaky finger.

TURNIP-TOE
Please p-patch me through to the June Lo Ching Laundromat.

Turnip-Toe COUGHS blood onto the counter. He inhales deeply.

TURNIP-TOE
(continuing)
Hello June, this is Randolph--
(he listens)
Turnip-Toe, yeah. C-can I speak to my m-mother, please?

Turnip-Toe stares at the Receptionist's corpse while he waits.

TURNIP-TOE
(continuing)
Hey ma.
(he listens)
N-nothing's wrong. I just wanted to let you know that I might be home a l-little late...and that I love you...
(he listens)
I know you're busy...I just wanted to let you know.
(he listens)
All right ma. Bye.

Turnip-Toe hangs up.

INT. THE LION, CENTRAL ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Turnip-Toe sags against the wall of the elevator, his eyes blinking languidly as he fights to remain conscious. Drops of blood spatter the floor. Turnip-Toe watches the golden arrow glide across the number six and halt upon the number seven. BING.

INT. THE LION, SEVENTH FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Turnip-Toe staggers up the hallway, his face swollen, his mouth and nostrils a crimson smear. He passes two TEENAGE GIRLS; they are white and pretend not to notice him.

Turnip-Toe comes to room 718. He ducks below the looking-hole and KNOCKS.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
What?

TURNIP-TOE
It's the cleaning boy-- I hear you've got some robes and hoods that need mending?

The door to the room opens, revealing SKINNY.

SKINNY
You joking with m-

Turnip-Toe stands up, withdraws the pistol from his waistband, and jams it into Skinny's left nostril.

SKINNY
(continuing)
Now hold on just one moment-

TURNIP-TOE
Quiet. Open your mouth up wide or I'll shoot you right now.

Skinny opens the pale, tremulous orifice at the center of his white beard. Turnip-Toe clears his throat and then spits into Skinny's mouth, an agglutination of saliva, blood and mucus.

TURNIP-TOE
(continuing)
Swallow it.

Skinny complies, the sharp, whiskered knot in his throat jumping up and down.

TURNIP-TOE
(continuing)
Your skin's gettin' darker already.

Turnip-Toe COUGHS violently- spattering blood pell-mell- yet maintains a steady hold on the pistol.

TURNIP-TOE
(continuing)
Get inside, cracker.

Skinny backs into his room, the barrel of the gun jammed firmly into his left nostril, Turnip-Toe following.

The door shuts...and is locked with a SNAP.

TURNIP-TOE (O.S.)
Everyone put on your bright white vestments-- we gonna have a fashion show here today.
(he coughs)
Once you all 're dressed, I'll be puttin' a third hole in each of your nigger-hatin' hoods.

INT. THE LION, LORALINE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens. The three toughs, Daniel and the Gaunt Man enter. The Gaunt Man takes the key from the keyhole, shuts and locks the door. He sees the mezuzah nailed to the door frame. He kisses his index and middle finger and then presses them to the Judaic talisman.

Through the open window come the muffled sounds of five GUNSHOTS.

DANIEL
Lots of fun stuff is happening here today.

INT. THE LION, HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby is empty, excepting Vivian, the voluptuous burlesque dancer from Stumpy's shindy. She stands at the counter, irritation plain upon her sultry face.

Loraline, wearing a pink dress and matching chapeau, walks on her white high-heels through the front door; Vivian turns to face her.

VIVIAN
You the receptionist?

LORALINE
No.

Vivian, further annoyed, turns back to the counter.

LORALINE
(continuing)
I saw you perform last night...you're very talented.

Vivian, still turned away from Loraline, frowns.

LORALINE
(continuing)
What's the best way to get into show-business?

VIVIAN
Tits. Big ones. Leave me alone- I ain't in the mood to be your goddam mentor.

Loraline is surprised by the brusque response.

LORALINE
Thanks for the encouragement.

Loraline walks towards the central elevator. She presses the 'Call' button.

INT. THE LION, FOURTH FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Loraline holds her white heels in her left hand as she pads barefoot up the carpeted hall, towards her room.

INT. MIAMI BEACH POLICE PRECINCT, KERRINGTON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Kerrington sits at his oversized desk, his eyes glazed over. He stares dumbly at the table fan and the tinsel that SNAPS in the current it generates. He blinks, his eyelids heavy and slow to reopen.

STANLEY
You need some rest.

Kerrington looks up and notices Stanley.

KERRINGTON
How long have you been standing there?

STANLEY
When was the last time you slept?

KERRINGTON
What day is it now?

Stanley walks around the enormous desk.

STANLEY
Time to get you home. There are more officers than just us.

KERRINGTON
How in the hell are you so damn perky?

STANLEY
Have you noticed how often I've been disappearing to the toilet?

KERRINGTON
Twice an hour...occasionally more.

STANLEY
Seventeen cups of coffee puts a man and his bowels at odds with one another.

Kerington grimaces at the disclosure; Stanley hooks his hand beneath Kerrington's left arm and helps him up.

STANLEY
(continuing)
You going back to The Lion?

KERRINGTON
No. I think it's time I went back home. I should probably...
(he yawns)
...pick up my stuff from the hotel...
(he yawns)
...pick up my stuff...and check out.

STANLEY
Why don't you do that tomorrow?

Kerrington YAWNS again and nods.

KERRINGTON
Fine.

INT. STANLEY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The car is small and loud, its engine RATTLING belligerently as Stanley steers it up the road. Kerrington sits in the front passenger seat, his arms folded, a frown beneath his rusty mustache and pointed nose. A tiny framed photograph of Stanley and his blond, pillar of a wife rests on the dashboard.

A red STOP flag pokes out of an upcoming traffic box. Stanley awkwardly applies the brakes.

KERRINGTON
What idiot gave you a license?

Stanley does not respond; the GO flag pokes out of the box; he accelerates. Kerrington's eyes drift across the framed photo; he looks at Stanley's wife...and remembers something.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
I've changed my mind.

STANLEY
You've decided that you're never going to sleep?

KERRINGTON
No. Swing by The Lion. I want to check up on Miss Laura Lineski and thank her for coming forward like she did.

Kerrington shuts his eyes, folds his arm, frowns and tilts his head back down.

Stanley spins the wheel to the left, steering onto a perpendicular road. He glances over at Kerrington and grins.

STANLEY
You look grumpy even when you're asleep.

KERRINGTON
Eyes on the road.

INT. THE LION, LORALINE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is dark. Keys JINGLE outside. The door opens, swung wide by Loraline. A hand grabs her neck and yanks her inside. The door SLAMS shut.

A match is lit on the other side of the room, illuminating the person who holds it: the Gaunt Man. He walks over to the menorah and lights the raised candle in the center. He extinguishes the match with a gentle breath, plucks out the lit candle and then proceeds to light the other wicks with it...slowly illuminating the room with reddish-orange light.

The tough with the Broken Nose holds Loraline from behind, one hand clamped over her mouth and one arm slung around her neck. Loraline violently swings her high-heeled shoes at the face of her captor: the heel pierces his cheek, burrowing into his mouth. He GROANS and releases her.

The tough with the Lisp grabs Loraline by the hair and- with his free hand- punches her in the stomach, driving the air from her lungs. She doubles over; he tightens his grip upon her tresses of blond hair.

The Broken Nose tough yanks the high-heeled shoe from his cheek- exposing a new side entrance to his mouth- and hurls it angrily at Loraline's exposed back. SMACK. She suppresses a yelp; the shoe bounces off her spine, leaving a red weal. The injured tough claps a hand to his face and spits out the blood which concurrently flows into his mouth and down his cheek from his rent cheek.

The Gaunt Man and Daniel exchange glances and nod. Daniel walks toward Loraline; she is still doubled over, her hair in Lisp's steely grip.

DANIEL
(to Loraline)
I assume that you know why we are here?

Loraline does not answer. Her eyes survey the room and land upon the window: it is open. Lisp yanks her long blond tangle of hair, pulling her upright.

DANIEL
(continuing; to Loraline)
Did you fink to the Police Chief?

Loraline looks into the spry man's mismatched eyes.

LORALINE
You were going after his child.

The Gaunt Man walks up to Loraline. He coughs, his cough similar to that of a female infant. Loraline cringes as the fetid smell of his moist breath assails her.

The Gaunt Man takes Loraline's right hand in his cold, pale palm. With his other hand, he examines her tremulous fingers, rubbing his oily fingertips along her smooth skin, divining the delicate joints and knuckles beneath. He nods in approbation and then releases her hand.

The Gaunt Man thrusts his right index finger into his cupped left hand and then retracts it.

The Gaunt Man thrusts his right middle finger in into his cupped left hand, squeezes the finger, and then retracts it.

The Gaunt Man thrusts his right ring and pinky finger into his open mouth and then retracts them.

Daniel, comprehending, nods. He tosses a pair of scissors to the tough with the Broken Nose and bleeding cheek.

DANIEL
(to Broken Nose)
Cut off her index finger and shove it up her twat. Cut off her middle finger and shove it in her rectum. Cut off her ring and pinky fingers and make her eat them.

The Gaunt Man raises his thumb before his left eye and then his right eye.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Then gouge out her eyes with her own thumb.

SNIP. Loraline SHRIEKS as her index finger falls to the floor.

With her left hand, Loraline grabs and pulls down the hand of the tough who holds her hair; she bites into his meaty forearm...viciously. Her incisors dig into skin and tendon, right down to the bone-- he can no longer keep his grip. He YELLS and releases her hair.

Loraline, clasping her bleeding right hand, bolts toward the window, hurtling her narrow blue bed.

DANIEL
(continuing)
Shoot her!

Loraline's beeline brings her to the egress. Daniel withdraws his gun and points it at her. She lunges through the fourth story window.

EXT. THE LION, DUAL SWIMMING POOL AREA - SAME

Loraline tumbles through the air, towards the closer of the two j-shaped swimming pools, her arms pin-wheeling as she plummets.

She stares at the onrushing pool rising up to meet her, its silky water lit by the yellow lights beneath the surface. The pools rises up to her face and...

Loraline's body and left leg impact the water; SPLASH; her right leg strikes the surrounding wood decking; SNAP! She SHRIEKS. Her right shin is broken into an almost perpendicular compound fracture.

Shocked but still somehow alert, Loraline floats in the water, her injured leg jutting out of the pool. She presses her bleeding right hand to her stomach in an effort to staunch the flow of blood from the stub of her shorn index finger.

BANG. A bullet pierces the water a foot from Loraline's face. BANG. Loraline YELPS as a bullet tears into her right foot, only inches below the compound fracture.

Loraline inhales deeply and dives into the water, SCREAMING in defiance of the unbearable pain that races through her body.

Using her arms and left leg to propel her, she swims to the bottom of the pool, her right leg wagging lazily at the extra joint in-between her ankle and knee, blood trailing like squid ink from her right hand and foot. ZWISSSS. A bullet sails by her, slowed by the water, followed by another, ZWISSSS.

The french deck doors swing open: Stanley runs onto the deck, guns drawn. He runs directly beneath the fourth floor window from which protrude two arms holding pistols.

Stanley leans against the wall and points both of his guns directly up, as if to shoot the dim stars above.

INT. THE LION, LORALINE'S ROOM - SAME

The tough with the Lisp and the (bleeding) tough with the Broken Nose point pistols through the window, at the swimming pool. Daniel stands immediately behind them, watching and unhappy.

BROKEN NOSE
She's like a fish.

The Gaunt Man taps Daniel; Daniel turns his face around; the Gaunt Man SLAPS him and shakes his head, 'no'. Daniel, cowed, looks away from the Gaunt Man, toward the toughs.

DANIEL
Let's go down and get her-- we're making a bit of a spectacle doing it this way.

BLAM. The tough with the Broken Nose GRUNTS and stumbles back from the window, clasping his bleeding wrist. BLAM. The tough with the Lisp CRIES out as a bullet lances his elbow; he drops his gun outside the window and clumsily retreats into the room.

KERRINGTON (O.S.)
There are ten police officers in the hall right outside this door. Come out with your hands raised and your fingers nice and splayed. We are anxious to shoot and kill each and every one of you, so please give us some provocation.

DANIEL
How'd the cops get here so fast?

The toughs, bewildered, look at Daniel and then at the Gaunt Man. The Gaunt Man stares with cold alien eyes upon Daniel and the toughs.

INT. THE LION, FOURTH FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

Kerrington is the only person in the entire hallway. He lies beside the door to Loraline's room, on his stomach, his gun raised ten inches off of the ground.

EXT. THE LION, DUAL SWIMMING POOL AREA - SAME

Stanley lifts Loraline out of the water; she is barely conscious. Stanley GASPS when he sees her bleeding hand and her flopping, bullet-pierced foot wagging below the compound fracture.

INT. THE LION, LORALINE'S ROOM - SAME

The Gaunt Man coughs once- a slight, effeminate noise- raises his hands and walks towards the door. He twists the lock. CLUNK. He twists the doorknob and pulls the door wide.

BLAM. The Gaunt Man's right shin erupts in a spray of crimson.

Kerrington aims his pistol. BLAM. The tough with the Lisp catches a bullet in the left knee, the cap bursting into a spray of white marbles.

Kerrington aims his pistol. BLAM. Daniel's ankle is pierced.

Kerrington aims his pistol. BLAM. The tough with the Mustache catches a bullet in the left thigh. Kerrington aims his pistol. BLAM. The next bullet pierces the same tough's right thigh.

Kerrington aims his pistol. BLAM. The tough with the Broken Nose, pierced cheek and shot right wrist CRIES out as a bullet pokes his left knee.

The Gaunt Man crawls forward and SLAMS the door.

INT. THE LION, FOURTH FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

Kerrington reloads.

An eight-year-old GIRL with gleaming braces pokes her head from an opened doorway further up the hall.

KERRINGTON
Run downstairs and call the police. Tell them that Chief Kerrington wants the entire station here.

The Girl stares at him...inert.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Go now!

The Girl runs down the hall and into the stairwell.

EXT. THE LION, DUAL SWIMMING POOL AREA - SAME

Stanley carries Loraline through the french decking doors, into the hotel.

INT. THE LION, FOURTH FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

Kerrington hears SHRIEKING inside the room. He looks at the door, puzzled.

DANIEL (O.S.)
Don't, Mr. Fleischen do-

Daniel SHRIEKS and then COUGHS horribly. The door opens. Kerrington tenses, aiming his pistol.

Daniel falls partway outside, face-first into the hall. He vomits explosively onto the hall carpet and is dragged back into the room. The door SLAMS shut and is locked with a loud SNAP.

Kerrington looks at the puddle of vomit: within the ochre ichor lie two chewed-up fingers.

Kerrington points the barrel of his gun towards the door and waits...

INT. THE LION, HOTEL LOBBY - SAME

Stanley sets Loraline down on a sofa- her bleeding hand wrapped with a stocking, her bleeding foot tied off with a neck-tie- and races towards the front desk telephone. The eight-year-old Girl with braces is on the line.

STANLEY
Miss, I'm sorry but I need to-

GIRL
(to Stanley)
Wait your turn, sir-- this is police business.
(into the phone)
I just told you ma'am-- please pay attention. Chief Kerrington said to send those men. Am I going to have to get my mother involved?

Stanley stares at the precocious girl in amazement.

EXT. THE BEACH - MIDNIGHT

Charles, still wearing his groom tuxedo (sans left sleeve), lies asleep upon the beach, beside the six-foot long sand-wrought sculpture of his wife's face.

Upon the ridge behind him stands a half nude woman in a tattered dress. Her face is horribly disfigured. Her skin is cracked, red-hued and swollen with pustules; her left eye cannot open, owing to the swelling around its perimeter. Tears stream down her face, lost in the crags of her affliction.

The woman stares down at Charles, the wind pulling at what remains of her wedding dress. In her hands she holds a turquoise envelope.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BEACH - TWO IN THE MORNING

An independently-minded wave climbs up the sand and over Charles' denuded shoes and sullied socks. His eyes open to face the sliver of moon looming in the vault of clouds and stars. He sits up and rubs his eyes.

Charles sees the turquoise corner of an envelope poking from his breast pocket. With an unsteady hand, he extricates the parcel into the light of the moon.

Written on the outside of the envelope, in a flowing cursive script, is his name, 'Charles'. He turns the turquoise parcel over and begins to shake. He opens the envelope and from it withdraws a folded sheet of blue paper.

Charles unfolds the missive and stares at it. In the same flowing cursive script is written:

'Charles,

Remembering the past is our only future.

Go back to Philadelphia or I will kill myself.

Carol'

Charles stares at the paper.

He is ruined.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. MIAMI TRAIN DEPOT - NINE AM

Mint green pillars hold up the corrugated aluminum ceiling of the glass-walled depot; benches and vending machines and PEOPLE fill the interior space, all warmly lit by the sun pouring in from the east. A train sits in the station, steam and smoke pouring off of the serpentine locomotive in a billowing confluence.

Upon the side of the cars is the image of a bunny with a smokestack protruding from its head, and roiling smoke pouring from that. The name Jackrabbit Express is written beside the icon.

A stout old man with white hair, a red uniform and a redder derby puts a cone to his red lips, clears his throat and then speaks.

TICKET TAKER
Northbound Jackrabbit Railway is taking on passengers. Stops all along the east coast.

Vivian, the burlesque performer, lugs an enormous trunk towards the train. A slender and stimulated YOUNG MAN brushes back his hair and approaches her; Vivian descries him.

VIVIAN
Cram it sally-- you ain't my type. I like men. Rich ones.

The Young Man stops and turns away.

In the shade nearby- beside a pull-knob sandwich vending machine- stand two very tired onlookers: Kerrington and Stanley. The duo watches five BOSTON COPS walk toward the train, escorting Clarence and Elena O'Doershell, both of whom are handcuffed, yet remarkably composed and cheerful. Three gray-suited FEDERAL AGENTS follow closely behind, each with a newspaper rolled-up and tucked beneath his armpit.

KERRINGTON
Where are the O'Doershell kids?

STANLEY
With their grandparents. They were rather...effervescent about the change in guardianship.

KERRINGTON
I bet.

Following the O'Doershell retinue is one far larger: eighteen BOSTON COPS escorting a line of handcuffed men toward the locomotive. The men are: Murchenko, Frankie and the three toughs, Broken Nose, Lisp and Mustache. The three toughs walk with the aid of crutches...and have fewer fingers than they once did; their faces and necks are covered with raking fingernail scratches.

Behind them is Daniel, seated in a wheelchair. Two COPS push the infirm gangster; four other COPS walk beside him.

Daniel's empty eye sockets are covered over with white patches stained brown with dried blood; the majority of his nose has been bitten off; he has three remaining fingers.

Five yards behind him, The Gaunt Man- handcuffed and fettered- walks with the aid of an ornate ivory cane, his face turned down from the light that burns upon the back of his pale, veiny skull. Five FEDERAL AGENTS walk around him, guns drawn; they remain equidistant from and wary of their charge.

Kerrington glances away from the emigration of the Beantown crimelords, surveying the crowd. Within the throng he spots someone of interest. He nudges Stanley, points and then hurries forward.

Further up along the train, Stumpy Stubbs leads Madeline and Irish (on a leash and resentful) toward the train. Madeline wears a coruscating diamond ring upon her left hand. Yardley follows behind them.

The Police Chief walks directly in front of Stumpy Stubbs. His sharp eyes shine hotly at the silent film star. Stumpy grins.

KERRINGTON
(continuing; hateful but calm)
No more shindigs. Ever.

Stumpy frowns.

STUMPY STUBBS
I guess prohibition trailblazed the way for outlawing everything that's enjoyable in life, eh?

KERRINGTON
Don't come back.

Kerrington turns away from Stumpy.

STUMPY STUBBS
Wait just a minute Chief. Do you want me to sign something for you...you know, as an apology for what happened. You can give it to your wife or something.

Kerrington spins around, disbelief molding his sharp features.

KERRINGTON
I do not want your goddam autograph.

BARK! Irish lunges forwards and bites Kerrington's shin.

STUMPY STUBBS
Irish! Stop that.

Kerrington shakes his leg loose from the unruly Scottish Terrier. He looks hatefully at the small GROWLING dog.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
You going to book him?

Kerrington eyes Stumpy Stubbs distastefully.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
Another charge and he's doing seven years hard labor...
(whispered)
...he's on parole.

Kerrington SPITS in the ground and walks away. Stanley represses a snicker and then joins his boss.

Stumpy looks at Yardley; a hint of melancholy creeps into the entertainer's eyes.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
Will you make it to the wedding?

YARDLEY
Of course-- I haven't missed one yet.

STUMPY STUBBS
(grinning)
Well then...I'll see you in California.

The two men hug.

In the shade of the aluminum-roof waiting area, Kerrington and Stanley walk toward the exit of the glass-walled depot. Charles, drunk and melancholic (and still in his frayed tuxedo), stumbles past Kerrington toward the train. He has no luggage. Clutched in his hand is the turquoise envelope.

Kerrington frowns (moreso) and looks away from the drunken groom, toward Stanley.

KERRINGTON
I'm going home to sleep for about twelve hours-- you should do the same. We resume the raids tonight.

STANLEY
You're joking, right?

Kerrington looks at Stanley with eyes utterly devoid of humor.

EXT. TOERBEN'S ROOFTOP SWIMMING POOL - JUST BEFORE NOON

Reginald, his blond hair slicked back from his cherubic face, walks past the LOUNGERS atop the mint green hotel. He walks towards the lopsided kidney bean-shaped pool and then climbs up the small wooden ladder leading onto the diving board.

He adjusts his swimming trunks, tucks in his swimming shirt and walks up to the edge of the wooden plank. His toes poke over the edge, ten apprehensive scouts. He looks down into the clear water and sees his own reflection. He looks at his hands: they are shaking.

MALE VOICE
Are you still thirsty?

Reginald turns around; Nathan stands at the end of the diving board, grinning. The small muscular man scratches his left shoulder...the one with the mermaid tattoo upon it. He then scratches his right shoulder...the one with the anchor upon it.

REGINALD
Hello.

NATHAN
You regenerate quickly-- like a crab.

Reginald, not sure how to take this remark, nods.

NATHAN
(continuing)
Need a drink?

REGINALD
No. I'm trying to stop.

Nathan nods in approbation.

NATHAN
That's the first smart thing I've heard you say. You've been eating protein or something?

REGINALD
I promised my sister I'd quit.

NATHAN
Sounds like you've got a loving sibling.

REGINALD
You have two options: play nice or go and find another playmate.

NATHAN
You keep talking like that and I might actually grow to like you.

Reginald smirks, nods, turns back to face the pool and jumps in, landing with a proud, loud SPLASH.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NOON

The white light of the midday sun turns the hospital room into a glowing, supernal place. Loraline lies in bed, her right leg bound up in a cast from which several metal rods extrude; her right hand is bound up in thick gauze. She has several pillows tucked behind her back, keeping her upright; she reads a magazine called 'Sequins and Glitter.' With her left hand, she takes a pen from her night stand and circles the coruscating shoes of a dancer pictured in the magazine.

A KNOCK on the door startles her; she drops the pen.

KERRINGTON (O.S.)
Laura Lineski...? It's Chief Kerrington. Do you mind if I come in?

LORALINE
Are you going to chastise me and call me names?

KERRINGTON (O.S.)
I will not. I promise.

Loraline tucks the magazine beneath her pillows, wipes her hair from her face and clears her throat.

LORALINE
Come in.

The door opens to reveal Kerrington, a bouquet of flowers tightly wedged beneath his right armpit. He walks into the room and shuts the door quietly behind him.

LORALINE
(continuing)
You're pulverizing them. Your wife is going to be upset.

Kerrington looks at the flowers; the buds of half of them have been accidentally crushed. He grabs the paper-wrapped base and proffers the bouquet to Loraline.

KERRINGTON
Actually...these are for you.

Loraline's eyes sparkle. She bites her lower lip and with the small spike of pain, calms the rising flood of emotion. She extends her hands and takes the flowers from the Police Chief.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Thank you for...for what you did. That was very brave. I don't know what might have happened to my...my little...

Kerrington looses his voice momentarily. He looks away from Loraline's deep, bright eyes, toward the window. She turns her gaze from his cracked, pointy face back to the flowers she clasps in her hands.

LORALINE
Thank you for these-- they mean a lot to me. I've received heaps of flowers from men who want something from me, but these...

Loraline brings the flattened flowers to her nose and inhales.

LORALINE
(continuing)
These are different.

Kerrington looks back at her and nods.

KERRINGTON
You deserve much more than that, Miss Lineski. I behaved like a prick and still you helped me. You are a much more...tolerant person than I am.

Loraline nods in agreement.

LORALINE
I've read about your tolerance- or lack thereof- in the papers all week. Is there a reason why you're so enthused about prohibition?

KERRINGTON
I believe in it.

LORALINE
Why?

Loraline watches Kerrington's mouth turn into a tense line below his rusty mustache.

KERRINGTON
Alcohol is a hiding place for those who can't own up to who they are...and who they aren't. The weak, the dissatisfied and the guilty soak their brains with that stuff instead of properly dealing with their troubles and bettering themselves. No good ever came out of alcohol that I can think of...and a whole lot of bad undeniably did.

With rough fingernails, Kerrington scratches his nape. He lowers his hand, shakes his head and then continues.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
My uncle was killed by an intoxicated motorist in St. Louis and throughout my childhood I watched my drunk father terrorize my mother...until he beat her to death right in front of me.

The maelstrom stirs within Kerrington.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
No sober man could have done that.

LORALINE
That...that must have been horrible.

Kerrington nods; he is finished discussing his past. He changes the subject.

KERRINGTON
How did you end up...in your line of work?

LORALINE
I was promiscuous at a young age, and got thrown out by my parents because of it. Things just got... progressively worse after that.

KERRINGTON
Are they still alive?

LORALINE
I think so. Once I get a respectable job, I think I might pay them a visit.

For the first time in a long time, Kerrington smiles.

CUT TO BLACK

Titlecard: Northern Florida, near Tampa

INT. JACKRABBIT RAILWAY, DINING CAR - AFTERNOON

The train chugs north on the east coast railway. In the dining cart- the nexus of refined, varnished and upholstered modernity- Stumpy Stubbs and Madeline sit in a love seat fronted by a small cocktail table, upon which rest two Bloody Marys. Irish sits beneath the love seat; he is miffed.

Madeline, asleep, leans her unblemished face against Stumpy's left shoulder. Stumpy, uncharacteristically somber, stares at a note in his hands, which reads:

'Stumpo,

I have bribed several of the guards and am going to make a break for it. I need to hide in your room until the next stop. Elena is on her own.

Your pal,

Clarence

P.S. We have history.'

Stumpy shakes his head, desperately- and pointlessly- wishing that he were not tied to this bad man.

CUT TO:

INT. JACKRABBIT RAILWAY, FIRST CLASS CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

The cabin is lit by a wide picture window and is furnished with a white bearskin rug, two ornate mirrors surmounted by elephant tusks, a wide bed and a mahogany armoire. Stumpy Stubbs holds a golf club in his hands and is lining up a putt with a cherry tomato, aiming for the dead bear's ferociously frozen open mouth.

The silent film star brings the head of the putter back; there is a KNOCK upon the door. He tosses the club onto his bed. The train passes into a stand of tall, thick trees: the light streaming through the window is interrupted. Everything falls into darkness. The locomotive ROARS upon the tracks.

The train clears the copse: light is admitted once again into the cabin. Stumpy opens the door; Clarence stands in the hallway outside. The gangster clutches his bleeding stomach with his right hand; his pale face is beaded with sweat; his thick eyebrows and mustache glisten like black slugs. Stumpy reaches forward to help the fugitive gangster.

Everything falls into darkness; the train ROARS.

Light returns. Stumpy is holding Clarence. Clarence presses a pistol into Stumpy's right hand and a knife into Stumpy's left hand. The silent film star looks into the hallway beyond: it is empty.

Everything falls into darkness; the train ROARS.

Light returns. Three FEDERAL AGENTS, each wearing a gray suit, a gray fedora and holding a pistol, run up the hall toward Stumpy's cabin. One of the men has been shot in the arm and clutches the resultant carmine swatch on his left sleeve. Stumpy raises the gun.

Everything falls into darkness; the train ROARS.

Gunshots light up the darkness like the heads of myriad struck matches-- BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG...

CUT TO:

INT. JACKRABBIT RAILWAY, DINING CAR - TWILIGHT

The crepuscular sun slanting in through the windows is a vibrant yellowish-orange hue. The varnished wood, beveled whorls, curtains, rugs, dishes and silverware all take on the sun's timbre: the entire dining cart looks as if it is made of gold. A few ELDERLY COUPLES enjoy early dinners at the south end of the car.

Madeline and Irish are asleep on the love seat in the north end; the terrier's nose is pressed against her neck, leaving a moist little smudge.

The door to the adjacent car slides open. Stumpy Stubbs, his face white and covered with a sheen of sweat, staggers in. He hobbles over to the love seat.

STUMPY STUBBS
Move over...or risk being sat upon!

Madeline's eyes flicker open; she sees Stumpy looming above her. She sits upright and makes room for him.

He collapses upon the love seat. Irish, having narrowly escaped Stumpy's rump, jumps out of the small sofa, lands upon the floor and GROWLS.

Madeline looks at Stumpy's pale, sweating face. Her wide brown eyes survey his entire body: his left leg ends at the ankle...his prosthetic foot is missing. Fear grips her heart like a dark hand of fire.

MADELINE
What's wrong?

Stumpy shakes his head in denial.

STUMPY STUBBS
Nothing to worry about, dear. I was helping Clarence out of a pickle...and I took a couple of slugs.

Stumpy COUGHS. Blood sprays in dual gouts from his chest. Madeline SHRIEKS; Irish BARKS.

MADELINE
I've got to get help!

Stumpy Stubbs slumps back in the love seat, shaking his head. Irish dances around Stumpy's foot and stump, WHIMPERING.

STUMPY STUBBS
If I...I soil myself...don't tell the newspapers.

Tears pour down Madeline's face.

MADELINE
Why Stumpy, why? The cops were going to lock him up!

STUMPY STUBBS
And he couldn't come after me some other time if I ignored his request? He couldn't send his thugs after me...or you?

Stumpy COUGHS again, blood sprays in jets from his bullet-pierced lungs. He GURGLES and summarily spits out red ichor.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
No man can escape his past, Madeline. Not one of us. I didn't have a choice...Clarence and I, we...

Madeline SOBS and shakes, seized by a paroxysm of grief.

STUMPY STUBBS
(continuing)
We have history.

Madeline stands up.

MADELINE
I'm getting help!

Madeline runs out of the dining cart. Stumpy looks at Irish; Irish jumps up onto the love seat beside him. Stumpy begins to lose consciousness.

STUMPY STUBBS
(to Irish)
Take care of her...or at least... don't bite her.
(he coughs)
Please put some...nickels in the hat for Stumpo...the ragtime king...

He closes his eyes and exhales, the susurration wet with blood. Irish WHIMPERS.

Stumpy Stubbs does not take another breath.

FADE TO BLACK

Titlecard: In or Abutting Miami Beach

INT. FLORAL STORE - NIGHT

The back of a flower store has been turned into a speakeasy; the front windows are covered with black cloth to obscure the illicit goings-on within.

Two tables, each surrounded with six CARD-PLAYERS, sit beneath the wooden boxes of variegated orchids and other Floridian air plants that hang on copper twine from the ceiling. A card player with yellow sunglasses and a Hawaiian shirt looks at his hand: he has three aces and two Kings.

YELLOW SUNGLASSES
It's my wager.

The card player pushes his yellow sunglasses up the bridge of his nose. The Chubby Card-Player next to him looks at his glasses.

YELLOW SUNGLASSES
(continuing)
Don't look at the reflection!

The Chubby Card Player hastily turns his gaze back down to his own cards.

YELLOW SUNGLASSES
(continuing)
I raise you...this!

The card player with yellow sunglasses pushes forward his entire pile of chips and nickels.

CRACK! The front door flies open; the handle hangs limply from its housing, a tangle of torn steel. Kerrington, Stanley and four OFFICERS storm inside.

KERRINGTON
This is a raid.

YELLOW SUNGLASSES
Let me finish out this hand, officers-- I'll cut you in on-

KERRINGTON
Shut up.

CUT TO:

Titlecard: Wednesday

INT. CAR TIRE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A young Asian Man named WU walks up to a wall upon which numerous car tires and hubcaps hang. In his left hand he holds a large, oil-stained bag; with his right hand, he knocks upon a suspended metal hubcap. CLANG. CLANG. CLANG-CLANG.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Yeah?

WU
It's Wu.

The rectangular outline of a hidden door illumines amidst the hanging wheels and hubcaps, delineating a secret door. The door carries many of the circular adornments with it as it opens out from the wall. Yellow light illumines the smoke that pours from within; a small WOMAN with curly hair pokes her head out.

SLAM. Wu and the curly-haired Woman look further into the warehouse, toward the main entrance. Stanley, Kerrington and four OFFICERS hastily approach the bewildered duo.

STANLEY
Give me that chow mein...and then hands in the air.

KERRINGTON
Don't get cute.

STANLEY
I'm hungry.

CUT TO:

Titlecard: Thursday

INT. SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

The hidden bar is unoccupied except for the lone drunk PROPRIETOR, a slender man with white hair and cloudy eyes. With a sword-shaped toothpick, the inebriated fellow is repeatedly stabbing a candied cherry in the palm of his hand.

Kerrington, Stanley and four OFFICERS walk through the ajar door.

KERRINGTON
This is a raid.

The Proprietor looks around, surveying his empty speakeasy; he then blinks and looks up at Kerrington.

PROPRIETOR
You think we'll all fit into the wagon?

KERRINGTON
Hands in the air.

PROPRIETOR
You already ruined my business, can't you just let me-

KERRINGTON
Shut up.

CUT TO:

Titlecard: Friday

INT. LIVING/DINING ROOM, KERRINGTON HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Kerrington, exhausted, walks into his living room. He notices something upon the floor: beside the sofa, like silent sentinels, sit Joyce and Eddie's shoes. Kerrington looks up, into the darkened hallway.

INT. EDDIE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eddie lies asleep in his bed, clutching his denuded stuffed bear with his right hand, and sucking his left thumb. Kerrington, within the opened doorway, unties his shoes, quietly steps out of them, pads across the floor and stands beside Eddie. He plucks Eddie's thumb out of his mouth- POP!- and then leans over to kiss the boy on the forehead.

Kerrington turns and walks out of the room.

EDDIE
Goodnight dad.

KERRINGTON
Goodnight Eddie.

Kerrington gently shuts the door.

INT. KERRINGTON'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Wearing an undershirt and boxer shorts, Kerrington climbs into bed beside his wife. The bed shifts beneath his weight; Joyce surfaces from the depths of her slumber, her lids and lashes peel back to reveal groggy, tired eyes.

KERRINGTON
When'd you two get back?

JOYCE
Around seven o'clock.

KERRINGTON
Everything okay?

JOYCE
Yeah. Did you check in on Eddie? He stayed up until midnight waiting for you.

KERRINGTON
I tucked him in.

Kerrington pulls the blankets over his legs. He punches the pillow with his left hand in an effort to flatten it. FWAP. FWAP. FWAP.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Damn thing's too fluffy.

JOYCE
How's the crusade going?

Kerrington stops punching the pillow.

KERRINGTON
I wish you wouldn't make light of what I'm doing, Joyce-- it's important.

Joyce, irked by the comment, turns over and CLICKS on the light beside her, illuminating the room and the photo of her and Reginald as children which rests upon the night stand.

JOYCE
And your family isn't important?

KERRINGTON
I'm trying to make this town safe: busting up these operations is a good way to do that...and the only way to keep out unfriendly gentlemen like the ones who came here.

Joyce sits up in bed, shaking her head in disbelief.

JOYCE
You tell yourself whatever you want to, but you know goddam well that you're putting your job and your prohibition zealotry before your family.

Kerrington stares at his wife with a cold and firm gaze.

KERRINGTON
Don't analyze me.

JOYCE
Or what? Another terse threat? Another dark look? Another slap across the face?

Kerrington climbs out of bed. He walks towards the door; he addresses his wife without turning around.

KERRINGTON
Last week you made a sandwich so big I couldn't get it into my mouth. Last fall you made five sandwiches like that, the winter before, six.

Kerrington clenches his fists; his lips tighten until there is only a small crack beneath his rusty mustache.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Guilt always manifests itself, and often it does so in innocuous details...in things like sandwiches.

Joyce's eyes fill with tears; her mouth remains firmly closed.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
Unless you wish for me to speculate as to the reason for your ill conscience, don't you dare lay into me, what I do or why I do it.

Kerrington puts his hand on the doorknobs and twists the cut glass hemisphere.

KERRINGTON
(continuing)
I'll sleep on the couch tonight.

Without turning around, Kerrington walks out of the room and shuts the door behind him.

Joyce's shoulders shake; she presses her hand to her mouth to stifle the rising cry in her throat.

FADE TO BLACK

Titlecard: Three Weeks Later

EXT. SEABED, THIRTY FEET BELOW THE SURFACE - NOON

The Crab amputee scurries across blue, violet and red-veined coral on a tattoo of legs. A new claw is starting to emerge from the stump where the one with the green whorl was severed.

A triangular shadow glides across the seabed, momentarily covering the Crab. The Crab scampers towards an orifice in the blue-veined coral.

EXT. THE BEACH - SAME

A triangular stingray glides across the water, its anterior end terminating in a long spike; it looks like a spotted kite. It SNAPS its dorsal fin, redirecting its speedy careening.

EXT. HIALEAH CEMETERY - SAME

The overhead sun burns mercilessly, baking the soil and the dead. Kerrington, a rolled-up newspaper tucked under his arm, stands before the flat stone that reads, 'Louis Kerrington, buried by his son.' The name is stained brown with dried blood.

Kerrington stares balefully at the sun-bleached stone. He pulls the newspaper out from beneath his arm and flings it beside his father's grave.

The headline reads, 'Miami Beach, the Soberest Town in America!'

Kerrington kneels down to the grave and presses the knuckles of his clenched right fist into the name, Louis Kerrington. He GRINDS his fist into the coarse stone, abrading the callused skin, winnowing away dead flesh. Blood flows from his hand and covers his father's name.

CUT TO BLACK

The End.